



~~DAVID~~











# BAUDELAIRE

## *Prose and Poetry*

Translated by  
ARTHUR SYMONS



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## PREFACE

VITAL HEAT often cools down in translations: when a translator can render the vital heat of the original, then his translation should be consummate. "The life-blood of rhythmical translation," said Rossetti, is this commandment—that a good poem shall not be turned into a bad one. The only true motive for putting poetry into a fresh language must be to endow a fresh nation, if possible, with one more possession of beauty. Poetry, not being an exact science, literalness of rendering is altogether secondary to this chief law, yet, when it can be attained, the translator is fortunate to unite them." As it has been part of my constant challenge to myself, in everything I write, to be content with nothing short of that *vraie vérité* which one imagines to exist somewhere on this side of ultimate achievement, I have always tried to put some of my life-blood into my Translations. (One loves Catullus because the passion of love or hate burns in him like a flame, setting his verse on fire.) That is why I translated Catullus. Why did I translate Verlaine? Because he was a man who loved life more passionately than any man I ever knew and because his genius is unique, in the sense in which the genius and the imagination of Villon and of Baudelaire are unique. Why did I translate *Les Fleurs du Mal*? Because, for one thing, that book of his, in regard to my earliest verses, was at once a fascination and an influence, and because from that time onward his fascination has been like a spell to me, and because that masterpiece has rarely, if ever, been equalled, has rarely, if ever, been surpassed.

Baudelaire paints vice and the degradation of the lowest

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depths with cynicism and with pity, as in *Une Charogne*, where the cult of the corpse is the sensuality of asceticism, or the asceticism of sensuality: the mania of fakirs; material by passion, Catholic by perversity. So, in a sense, he is our modern Catullus.

In the poetry of Baudelaire, with which the poetry of Verlaine is so often compared, there is a deliberate science of sensual and sexual perversity which has something curious in its accentuation of vice with horror, in its passionate devotion to passions. Baudelaire brings every complication of taste, the exasperation of perfumes, the irritant of cruelty, the very odours and colours of corruption, to the creation and adornment of a sort of religion, in which an Eternal Mass is served before a veiled altar. There is no confession, no absolution, not a prayer is permitted which is not set down on the ritual. With Verlaine, however often love may pass into sensuality, to whatever length sensuality may be carried, sensuality is never more than the malady of love. It is love desiring the absolute, seeking in vain, seeking always, and finally, out of the depths, finding God. "To cultivate one's hysteria," I have written, "so calmly, and to affront the reader (*Hypocrite lecteur, mon semblable, mon frère*) as a judge rather than as a penitent; to be a casuist in confession; to be so much a moralist, with so keen and so subtle a sense of the ecstasy of evil: that has always bewildered the world, even in his own country, where the artist is allowed to live as experimentally as he writes. Baudelaire lived and died solitary, secret, a confessor of sins who had never told the whole truth, *le mauvais moine* of his own sonnet, an ascetic of passion, a hermit of the Brothel."

Baudelaire, who was infallible, spent most of his life in writing one book of verse (out of which all French poetry has come since his time) *Les Fleurs du Mal*, 1857; one book of prose, in which prose becomes a fine art—*Les Paradis Artificiels*, 1860; some criticism which is the sanest, subtlest, and surest which his generation produced, and a trans-



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lation which is better than a marvellous original. I allude, of course, to his translations from Poe's Prose. No man of his generation made so many discoveries; he discovered not only Poe, but Wagner, Delacroix, Manet and Constantin Guys; besides that of himself, the last of his discoveries, knowing, to a certainty and with pride, that he would always remain baffling and that no one—not even his mother, not even Gautier or Poulet-Malassis—had ever understood him. Had he been thoroughly understood by the age in which he lived? Blake, who said the final truth on this question: "The ages are all equal; but genius is always above the age," was not understood in his age.

Baudelaire wrote to Poulet-Malassis on the 16th of February, 1860: "*De Quincey est un auteur affreusement conversationniste et digressionniste, et ce n'était pas une petite affaire que de donner à ce résumé une forme dramatique et d'y introduire l'ordre. De plus, il s'agissait de fondre mes sensations personnelles avec les opinions de l'auteur original et d'en faire un amalgame dont les parties fussent indiscernables.*" In translating *Les Paradis Artificiels* I have deliberately omitted those interpolations which Baudelaire introduced into his versions of *De Quincey's* prose simply for this reason that, in taking *The Confessions of an Opium-Eater* as his main subject, he took for his foundation the stone which the builders rejected and in thus giving a proof of his own wisdom in building on this shifting foundation an edifice as imperishable as the earth's own self—this masterpiece, which apart from the necessary digressions, remains, in its way, unique in literature. As for the writer I have referred to, always experimenting with his form, there is no fixed mood underneath the swaying surface of his digressions, he writes certainly for the sake of writing and to rid himself of all the cobwebs which are darkening his brain. His mind is subtle, yet without direction; his nerves are morbidly sensitive, and they speak through all his work; he has the scholar's ideal of a style which is a separate thing

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*from the thing which it expresses. He defines "the one misery having no relief" as "the burden of the incommunicable." That burden, thus desperately realised, was always his, and the whole of his work is a tangled attempt to communicate the incommunicable.*

*Les Paradis Artificiels: Opium and Haschisch is the most wonderful book Baudelaire ever wrote. It has that astonishing logic which he possessed supremely, which unravels, with infinite precautions, every spider's web of this seductive drug, which enslaves the imagination, which subdues the will, which turns sounds into colours; which annihilates time and space; which to Baudelaire, and to those who, like myself, have undergone its fascination, has the occult divinity of an insidious and mysterious mistress. With the hallucinations all exterior forms take on singular aspects; are deformed and transformed. Then comes the transposition of ideas. The instant becomes eternity; the hallucination is sudden, perfect and fatal. Finally, the drugged man admires himself inordinately; he becomes the centre of the universe, certain of his virtue as of his genius. Then, in a stupendous irony, he cries: "Je suis devenu Dieu!"*

*One of Baudelaire's profoundest sayings is: "Toute débauche parfaite a besoin d'un parfait loisir." He gives his definition of the magic that imposes on haschisch its infernal stigmata; of the soul that sells itself; of how finally this hazardous spirit is driven, without being aware of it, to the edge of hell. In its victims there is nothing that is merely "animal" in their downright course towards repentance; no overwhelming passion carries them beyond themselves; they do not capitulate to an open assault upon their souls. It is the soul in them that sins, sorrowfully, without reluctance, inevitably.*

*Baudelaire began his *Petits Poèmes en Prose* in 1856, they come to an end in 1867. He wrote: "Faire cent bagatelles laborieuses qui exigent une bonne humeur constante (bonne*

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humeur nécessaire même pour traiter des sujets tristes), une excitation bizarre qui à besoin de spectacles, de foules, de musique, de réverbères même, voilà ce que j'ai voulu faire!" *Gautier wrote: "On voit que Baudelaire prétendait toujours diriger l'inspiration par la volonté et introduire une sorte de mathématique infaillible dans l'art."* *The foundation of Balzac's genius is la volonté. Believing, as we do now, in nerves and a fatalistic heredity, we have left but little room for the dignity and disturbances of violent emotion. Violent emotions produced these prose poems: and these, which are original in the extreme, ironical, cruel, complex, subtle, Satanical, are, like the rest of his impeccable work, the direct result of his heredity and of his nerves. And, in the finest of these he creates, like the poets, a humanity more logical than average life; more typical, more sub-divided among the passions, and having in its veins an energy almost more than human. So, as Mademoiselle Bistouri, the sinister Prostitute and the Evil Glazier rule this world of Baudelaire's creations, so, in the case of Balzac, money and the passions rule the world of La Comédie Humaine, Balzac's ultimate creation.*

*These Petits Poèmes en Prose are experiments, and they are also confessions. "Who of us," says Baudelaire, in his dedicatory preface, "has not dreamed, in moments of ambition, of the miracle of a poetic prose, musical without rhythm and without rhyme, subtle and staccato enough to follow the lyric motions of the soul, the wavering outlines of meditation, the sudden start of the conscience?"* This miracle he has achieved in these bagatelles laborieuses, to use his own words, in which the art is not more novel, precise and perfect than the quality of thought and of emotion. *In translating into English these little masterpieces, which have given me so much delight for so many years, I have tried to be absolutely faithful to the sense, the words and the rhythm of the original.*

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BAUDELAIRE

*Poems and Prose*



## I

### *THE STRANGER*

"WHOM do you love best, enigmatical man, tell me? Your father, your mother, your sister, or your brother?"

"I have neither father, nor mother, nor sister, nor brother."

"Your friends?"

"You use a word whose meaning is thus far unknown to me."

"Your country?"

"I do not know in what latitude it is situated."

"Beauty?"

"Willingly had I loved Beauty, Goddess and Immortal."

"Gold?"

"I hate it as you hate God."

"What, then, do you love, extraordinary stranger?"

"I love the clouds, the clouds that pass, eternally, the marvellous clouds."

## II

### *THE DESPAIR OF THE OLD WOMAN*

THE LITTLE shrivelled up old woman rejoiced when she saw the pretty child whom everyone adored and strove in every way to charm,—this pretty being as frail as was the little old woman herself, as toothless, as devoid of hair. And she came closer, that the child might see the joy in her face, and laugh with her. But the terrified child struggled under the caresses of the little decrepit old woman, and filled



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the house with his yelpings. Then the old woman retired into her eternal solitude, and she wept in a corner, saying to herself: "Ah! for us, miserable old females, the time has passed when we could please, when we could please even the innocent; and now we terrify the little children we want to love."

### III

#### *THE CONFITEOR OF THE ARTIST*

How POIGNANT is the fall of an Autumn day! Poignant as bodily pain, for there are certain exquisite sensations whose vagueness does not preclude intensity; and there is no point more stabbing than that of the Infinite. How blissful it is to drown one's gaze in the immensity of sky and sea! Solitude, silence, the incomparable chastity of the azure; a little sail shivering on the horizon, which by its minuteness and its isolation parodies my irremediable existence; the monotonous melody of the swell,—all these things think in me, or else I think in them (for in the grandeur of reverie the ego is soon lost!). They think, I say, musically and picturesquely, without quibblings, without syllogisms, without deductions.

Yet, whether these thoughts arise out of me or soar from the things themselves, they become too intense. Sensual energy creates restlessness and positive suffering. My nerves in their extreme tension give out only shrill and painful vibrations. Now the depth of the sky dismays me; its limpidity exasperates me. The insensibility of the sea, the immutability of the spectacle, revolt me. . . . Ah, must we suffer eternally, or eternally fly from the beautiful? Nature, pitiless enchantress, ever victorious rival, leave me! Cease to tempt my desires and my pride! The study of the beautiful is a duel in which the artist cries out with fear before he is vanquished.

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### IV

#### A JESTER

It was the explosion of the New Year; a chaos of mud and snow, traversed by a thousand coaches, shining with toys and with sweets, swarming with cupidity and with despair; the official delirium of a great City, enough to trouble the imagination of the serenest of hermits. In the midst of this hubbub and of this tumult, an ass was trotting rapidly, harassed by a lout who flourished a whip.

As the ass was about to turn the angle of a pavement, a handsome passer-by, gloved, cruelly cravatted, with patent leather boots, imprisoned in newly bought clothes, bowed ceremoniously before the humble beast, and said to it, as he raised his hat: "I wish you a happy New Year!" Then he returned to I know not what comrades of his with a fatuous air, as if he wanted them to add their approbation to his own contentment. The ass never saw this fine jester, but went on trotting zealously to where its duty called it.

As for me, I was seized suddenly by an incommensurable rage against this magnificent fool, who seemed to me to concentrate in himself the entire wit of France.

### V

#### THE DOUBLE ROOM

A ROOM which is like a reverie, a room truly *spiritual*, where the stagnant atmosphere is lightly tinged with pink and with blue. There the soul bathes in idleness, perfumed by regret and desire. There is something in it of the twilight, a glow of rose and of blue, a dream of felicity during an eclipse. The pieces of furniture have prostrated, lengthened, languid forms; they seem to dream, to be gifted with a somnambulistic life, like plants and minerals. The fabrics

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have a silent speech, like flowers, like skies, like setting suns. On the walls no artistic abominations. Relatively to the pure dream, to the unanalysed impression, definite art, positive art, is blasphemy. Here, all has the sufficient clearness and the delicious obscurity of harmony. An infinitesimal scent of the most exquisite choice, with which is mingled a slight humidity, swims in this atmosphere, where the slumbering spirit is lulled by the sensations of a hot-house. Muslin rains abundantly before the windows and the bed; it scatters itself in snowy cascades. On this bed the Idol sleeps, the sovereign of dreams. Whence came she hither? Who brought her hither? What magic power has installed her on this throne of reverie and of pleasure? What matters it? I see her, I know her. Those are her eyes whose flame traverses the twilight; those subtle and terrible mirrors that I recognize by their fearful malice! They attract, they subjugate, they devour the glance of the hapless ones who gaze upon them. Often have I studied them, those black stars which excite curiosity and admiration.

To what benevolent demon do I owe the delight of being thus surrounded with mystery, with silence, with peace and with perfumes? O beatitude! That which we usually call life, even in its greatest moments, has nothing in common with this supreme life which is now mine and which I savour minute by minute, second by second! Lo! There are no more minutes, there are no more seconds. Time has disappeared; it is Eternity which reigns, an Eternity of bliss!

But, loud and terrible, a knock resounds on the door, and, as in an infernal dream, it seems to me that a pickaxe has struck me in the stomach. And now a Spectre enters. It is a tipstaff who comes to torture me in the name of the law; an infamous concubine, who comes to cry misery and to add the trivialities of her life to the sorrows of mine; or else the errand-boy of a newspaper who asks for the rest of the manuscript.

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The paradisiacal room, the Idol, the sovereign of dreams, the *Sylphide*, as the great Chateaubriand used to say,—all this magic disappears at the spectre's brutal knock. Horror! I remember, I remember! Yes; this hovel, this abode of eternal Ennui, certainly is mine. Here are the stupid, dusty, ugly pieces of furniture; the chimney without flame and without embers, soiled with spittings; the sad windows on which the rain has traced furrows in the dust; the revised or unfinished manuscripts; the diary where the pencil has marked sinister dates! And this perfume of another world, with which my cunningly perfected senses were intoxicated is replaced, alas! by a foul odour of tobacco mixed with I know not what loathsome damp. One breathes here only the rancidity of desolation. In this narrow world, so full of disgust, only one known object smiles at me; the phial of laudanum, an old and terrible friend; but, like all one's women friends, alas! pregnant with caresses and treacheries.

Yes! Time has reappeared, now reigns as sovereign, and with this hideous old man returns his demoniacal retinue of Memories, Regrets, Spasms, Fears, Anguishes, Nightmares, Wraths and Nerves. I assure you that the seconds are strongly and solemnly accentuated, and that each one, issuing from the clock, says: "I am Life, unbearable, implacable Life!"

There is only one Second in life whose mission is to announce good news, that particular *good news* which causes inexplicable fear. Yes! Time reigns; he has reassumed his brutal despotism. And he drives me, with his double goad as if I were a bull,—“And gee up, then, moke! sweat, then, slave! Live, then, damnèd soul!”

### VI

#### TO EVERYONE HIS CHIMERA

UNDER A wide grey sky, on a wide dusty plain, without roads, without grass, without one thistle, without one nettle,



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I met several men who stooped as they walked. Each of them carried on his back an enormous Chimera, as heavy as a sack of corn or of coal, as heavy as the accoutrement of a Roman foot-soldier. But the monstrous Beast was not an inert weight; on the contrary, it enveloped and oppressed the men with its elastic and powerful muscles; with its two vast claws it hooked itself to the breast of its mount; its fabulous head surmounted the man's forehead, like one of those terrible helmets by which the ancient warriors hoped to add to the terror of their enemies.

I questioned one of these men, and I asked him where they were going. He told me he did not know, nor did the others, but that evidently they were going somewhere, because they were driven onward by an invincible need of walking.

I noticed one curious thing: none of these travellers seemed to be exasperated by the ferocious beast that clasped his neck and squatted on his back; they seemed to consider the Beast a part of themselves. All these weary and serious faces showed no signs of despair; under the splenetic cupola of the sky, their feet plunged in the dust of a land as desolate as that sky, they wandered on and on with the resigned aspect of those who are condemned to hope forever. The procession passed beside me and sank into the atmosphere of the horizon, at the point where the rounded surface of the planet escapes from the curiosity of the human eye. For several moments I persisted in my endeavour to fathom this mystery; but before long an irresistible indifference came over me, and I was more horribly overwhelmed by it than were they themselves by their crushing chimeras.

### VII

#### *THE MADMAN AND THE VENUS*

WHAT A wonderful day! The vast park swoons under the burning eyes of the sun, as youth swoons under Love's

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domination. The universal ecstasy of things is inarticulate; the very waters seem to sleep. So different from our human feasts is this silent orgy! One would say that an ever-increasing light made inanimate things glitter; that the excited flowers burned with the desire to excel the blue of the sky by the energy of their colours, and that the heat, making visible the perfumes, caused them to rise like smoke towards a star.

Nevertheless, amidst this universal rapture, I see an afflicted being. At the feet of a colossal Venus, one of these artificial fools, one of these willing clowns, whose chief business it is to make Kings laugh when Remorse and Ennui oppress them, made more hideous by a ridiculous and bizarre costume and wearing a fool's cap and bells, is huddled against the pedestal and lifts his weeping eyes towards the immortal Goddess.

And his eyes say: "I am the lowest and the most lonely of men, deprived of love and of friendship, and thus inferior to the lowest of the animals. Nevertheless, I, too, was born able to fathom Immortality and feel Beauty! Ah! Goddess! pity my sadness and my delirium!"

But the implacable Venus gazes out of marble eyes at I know not what, in the distance.

### VIII

#### *THE DOG AND THE FLASK*

"MY BEAUTIFUL dog, my dear dog, my good bow-wow, come and sniff an excellent perfume I have just bought from the best perfumer in the City."

The dog, wagging his tail, which is, I believe, the sign in these poor beings which corresponds to one's smile and one's laughter, approaches and with his wet nose curiously sniffs the uncorked flask; then, suddenly recoiling with fright, he barks at me reproachfully.

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"Ah! miserable dog, if I had offered you a package of excrement, you would have sniffed it with delight and perhaps would have devoured it. Thus, you yourself, unworthy companion of my sad life, are like the public, to whom one must never offer those delicate perfumes that would exasperate it, but only carefully chosen sweepings."

### IX

#### *THE EVIL GLAZIER*

THERE ARE natures which are purely contemplative and wholly unfit for action, which, nevertheless, under a mysterious and unknown impulse, act sometimes with a rapidity of which they would never have considered themselves capable. He who, for instance, fearing to find in his porter's lodge some vexatious missive, wanders in a cowardly fashion for a whole hour in front of his door without daring to enter; he who keeps a letter for two weeks without opening it; or he who after six months is still undecided on a step which should have been taken a year earlier. Such men sometimes feel themselves brusquely propelled into action by an irresistible force, like an arrow shot from a bow. The moralist and the doctor, who pretend to universal knowledge, cannot explain from whence so mad an energy suddenly springs in these idle and voluptuous souls, nor how, incapable of accomplishing the simplest and most necessary things, they find at a given moment a glorious courage for the execution of the most absurd and often the most dangerous actions.

One of my friends, the most inoffensive dreamer who ever existed, once set a forest on fire so as to see, he said, whether the flames would spread as rapidly as people generally as-

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served. Ten times over the experiment failed; but, at the eleventh, it succeeded far too well. Another lighted a cigar while standing next to a powder barrel, *in order to see, in order to know, in order to tempt destiny*, to prove his own energy, to gamble, to know the pleasure of anxiety, for no reason whatever, out of caprice, out of idleness. This is a kind of energy which is caused by weariness or by day dreams; and those in whom it manifests itself so obstinately are, in general, as I have said, the most indolent and the greatest dreamers. Another, timid to the point of lowering his eyes before those who glance at him, and who has to muster what remains to him of will in order to enter a café or stop at the box office of a theatre where those who hand him the tickets seem to be invested with the majesty of Minos, of Æacus and Rhadamanthus, will suddenly fall on the neck of an old man passing near him and embrace him enthusiastically before an astonished crowd. Why? Because—because his physiognomy was irresistibly sympathetic to him? Perhaps; but it is more legitimate to suppose that he himself would not be able to say why he had done it.

I have more than once been the victim of these crises and of these impulses that appear to be the action of malicious Demons that possess us and, unknown to ourselves, make us accomplish their most absurd desires.

One morning I got up feeling bad-tempered, sad, worn out with extreme weariness, driven, as it seemed to me, to do something wonderful, to commit some astonishing crime; and I opened the window, alas!

(Take heed, I beg, of this fact, that the spirit of mystification which, in certain people, is not the result of overwork, or of a combination, but of a fortuitous inspiration, seems by the intensity of the desire, to be part of that state of mind which doctors call hysteria and people more thoughtful than doctors, demonism, and impels us, unresisting,



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to commit many dangerous and unconventional actions.)

The first person I saw in the street was a glazier whose piercing and discordant cry came to me from the pavement below, through the foul and heavy atmosphere of Paris. It would be impossible for me to say why at the aspect of this poor man I was seized with a hatred at once sudden and despotic.

"Halloa! Halloa!" I shouted, calling to him to mount the stairs. At the same time I reflected, not without some gaiety, that the room being on the sixth floor, and the staircase very narrow, the man was bound to experience some difficulty in climbing up all those stairs and would knock the corners of his fragile freight against various obstacles.

At last, he appeared; I examined curiously all his panes of glass, and I said to him: "What! You have no coloured glass? Rose, blue, magical glass, glass worthy of Paradise? What impudence! How dare you wander about in poor neighbourhoods without glass through which one may see some beauty in life!" And I pushed him violently in the direction of the staircase, where he stumbled, grumbling.

I went over to the balcony and took up a little flowerpot, and when I saw the man just outside the door, I let fall my war engine on the outer edge of his hooks, and the shock making him fall backward, he somehow managed to break under his poor back what remained to him of his itinerant fortune, and it sounded like the bursting of a crystal palace shattered by lightning. Intoxicated with my folly, I shouted at him furiously: "Life is beautiful! Life is beautiful!"

These nervous jests are not without peril, and one often pays dear for them. But what matters an eternity of damnation to one who has found in a second an infinite joy?

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### X

#### AT ONE O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING

AT LAST I am alone. I hear no longer the noise of the belated and weary vehicles. For some hours we shall possess silence, if not repose. At last! The tyranny of the human face has disappeared; I suffer only from my own loneliness. At last! I can relax in a bath of shadows! First, a double turn of the key in the lock. It seems to me that this turn of the key will intensify my solitude and will strengthen the barriers that now separate me from the world.

Horrible life! Horrible city! Let us recapitulate our day: having seen several men of letters, one of whom asked me if one could go to Russia by land (he probably thought that Russia was an island); having disputed handsomely with the Editor of a magazine who answered every objection by saying: "This is the opinion of decent people," which implied that all other magazines are edited by rascals; having greeted twenty people of whom fifteen were unknown to me; having shaken hands in the same proportion, and that without having taken the precaution to buy gloves; having gone during a shower, to the rooms of a dancing-girl who wanted me to design for her a costume of *Vénustre*; having tried to court the favour of the Manager of a Theatre, who said as he ushered me out: "Perhaps you ought to call on Z: he's the heaviest, the stupidest and the most celebrated of all my playwrights; with him you might perhaps come to some understanding. Go to see him, and then we shall see"; having boasted (why?) of several villainous actions I had never committed, and having in a cowardly fashion denied certain other misdeeds that I accomplished with joy, an offence of boasting, a crime against human respect; having refused a simple favour to a friend, and

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having given a recommendation to a perfect knave: oh! what a relief to have finished with all that!

Discontented with myself and discontented with everyone, I should like to redeem myself and feel a little pride, in the silence and solitude of the night. Souls of those I have loved, souls of those I have sung, fortify me, sustain me, remove from me the lies and the corrupting vapours of the world, and you, Lord, my God! grant me the grace to fashion a few beautiful verses which will prove to me that I am not the lowest of men, that I am not inferior to those I despise.

### XI

#### *THE WILD WOMAN AND THE LITTLE MISTRESS*

"REALLY, MY dear, you weary me beyond measure and beyond all pity; to hear you sigh, one would say that you suffered more than those old women who glean the harvest-fields and the old beggar women who pick up crusts of bread outside the tavern doors. If at least your sighs expressed remorse, they would do you some honour; but they only indicate satiety and the weariness of repose. And, besides, you are always repeating useless words: 'Love me well; I have such need of you. Console me here and caress me there.' Come now, let me try to cure you; we shall perhaps find a way of doing it, for a few coins, at some fair, and without going very far.

"Look carefully at this solid iron cage in which this hairy monster, whose form, vaguely enough, resembles yours, is throwing himself about, howling like a soul in hell, shaking the bars like an orang-outang exasperated by exile, imitating to perfection, now the circular leaps of the tiger, now the stupid slouch of the polar bear.

"This monster is one of those animals one generally calls

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'my angel'! that is to say a woman. The other monster, he who is shouting at the top of his voice, a stick in one hand, is a husband. He has chained his legitimate wife as if she were a wild beast, and he exhibits her at the fairs around town, with the permission of the authorities, of course.

"Pay attention! See with what voracity (perhaps not simulated!) she pulls to pieces the living rabbits and the squealing fowls her keeper throws to her. 'Enough,' says he, 'you shouldn't spend all you have in one day'; and after this wise remark, he cruelly tears the prey from her, the divided intestines dangling for an instant between the teeth of the ferocious beast, of the woman, I mean.

"Now another stroke of the stick to quiet her! For she turns her terrible eyes glaring with greediness on the food of which she has been deprived. Good God! The stick isn't the kind that clowns use! Do you hear it smack despite the hairy covering? Now her eyes begin to protrude, now she howls *more naturally*. In her rage she flares all over, like the iron one beats on an anvil.

"Such are the conjugal manners of these two descendants of Adam and of Eve, these works of your hands, O my God! This woman is undoubtedly miserable, although after all, perhaps, the titillating enjoyments of glory are not unknown to her. There are miseries more incurable, miseries without compensation. But in the world into which she was cast, she has never been able to believe that any woman deserved any other destiny.

"Now it is our turn, most precious of women! After seeing the Hells with which the world is populated, what do you suppose I think of your pretty hell, you who lie only on fabrics as soft as your skin, who eat only cooked meat, and for whom a careful servant carves the daintiest morsels? What meaning do you suppose there can be for me in these sad sighs that rise from your perfumed breast, my well-nourished coquette? And all these affectations found in

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books, and this constant melancholy, calculated to inspire in the onlooker quite another sentiment than pity? In truth, I am seized at times with a desire to teach you what is the worst of all woes.

"To see you thus, dear delicate creature, with your feet in the filth and your eyes turned vaporously towards the sky as if to demand from it a King, one would say you were like a little frog invoking an ideal. If you scorn the small joist (which I am supposed to be, don't you know?) beware of the crane *who will eat you, gobble you and slay you for its pleasure!*

"Poet that I am, I am not the dupe you would like to believe, and if you weary me too often with your *precious whisperings*, I shall treat you like the *wild woman* that you are, or I shall throw you out of the window, like an empty bottle."

## XII

### CROWDS

It is not given to every man to take a bath in the multitude: to enjoy crowds is an art; and only he to whom in his cradle a fairy has bequeathed the love of masks and disguises, the hate of home and the passion of travel, can plunge, at the expense of humankind, into a debauch of vitality.

Multitude, solitude: equal and interchangeable terms to the active and fertile poet. He who does not know how to people his solitude, does not know either how to be alone in a busy crowd.

The poet enjoys this incomparable privilege, to be at once himself and others. Like those wandering souls that go about seeking bodies, he enters at will the personality of every man. For him alone, every place is vacant; and if certain places seem to be closed to him, it is because in his eyes they are not worth the trouble of visiting.



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The solitary and thoughtful stroller derives a singular intoxication from this universal communion. He who mates easily with the crowd knows feverish joys that must be for ever unknown to the egoist, shut up like a strong-box, and to the sluggard, imprisoned like a shell-fish. He adopts for his own all the occupations, all the joys and all the sorrows that circumstance sets before him.

What men call love is small indeed, indeed narrow and weak, compared with this ineffable orgy, this sacred prostitution of the soul which gives itself up wholly (poetry and charity!) to the unexpected as it occurs, to the stranger as he passes.

It is good sometimes that the happy people of this world should learn, were it only to humble their foolish pride for an instant, that there are higher, wider, and rarer joys than theirs. The founders of colonies, the shepherds of nations, the missionary priests, exiled to the ends of the earth, doubtless know something of these mysterious intoxications; and, in the midst of the vast family that their genius has raised about them, they must sometimes laugh at the thought of those who pity them for their chaste lives and troubled fortunes.

### XIII

#### *THE WIDOWS*

VAUVENARGUES SAID that in the public gardens there were paths haunted principally by disappointed ambition, by miserable inventors, by abortive glories, by broken hearts, by all those tumultuous and cheated souls in whom the last sighs of a storm have not subsided, and who recoil from the insolent stare of the joyous and the idle. These shadowy retreats are the trysting places of the cripples of life.

It is especially towards these places that the Poet and

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the Philosopher love to direct their avid conjectures. This is their richest grazing-ground. For if there is a spot they disdain to visit, as I have already intimated, it is where the joy of wealth is most evident. This turbulence in the void holds nothing to attract them; on the contrary, they feel themselves irresistibly drawn towards whatever is weak, ruined, saddened, orphaned. An experienced eye is never deceived. In these rigid or broken-down traits, in these hollow or dull eyes, where gleam the last flashes of the struggle, in these deep and many wrinkles, in these slow and halting steps, one deciphers immediately the innumerable tales of deceived love, of misunderstood devotion, of unrewarded efforts, of hunger and cold, humbly, silently endured.

Have you ever observed the poor widows seated alone on the benches of the parks? Whether they wear mourning or not they are easily recognized. Besides, there is always something lacking in the mourning worn by the poor, an absence of harmony which makes it even more distressing. They are forced to chaffer even with grief. Those who are rich wear their mourning elegantly.

Who is the saddest and most saddening of the widows? Is it the one who is dragging by the hand a child to whom she cannot tell her thoughts? or is it the one who is always alone? I don't know. I spent long hours, once, following one of these afflicted women; rigid, upright, wearing a worn-out shawl, she had in her being all the pride of a Stoic.

She was evidently condemned, by absolute solitude, to the habits of an old celibate, and the masculine character of her morals added a mysterious piquancy to their austerity. I don't know in what miserable café or by what means she procured her food. I followed her to a lending library, and I saw her, with bright eyes that once were burnt by tears, looking over the newspapers in an attempt to find some news which seemed to have a powerful and personal interest.

Then, in the afternoon, under an autumn sky, one of those

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skies from which descend crowds of regrets and memories, I saw her seated in a lonely place in the gardens, far from the crowd, where she seemed to be listening, to one of those concerts of regimental music which gratifies the Parisian taste. This was no doubt the little debauch of this innocent old woman (or of the purified old woman), the well-earned consolation for one of those heavy days without friends or gossip, or pleasure, which God had been sending her for many years, and three hundred and sixty-five times a year.

And yet another: I am never able to prevent myself from casting a glance, if not universally sympathetic, at least curious, on the crowd of outcasts who stand close together outside the enclosure of a public concert. The orchestra flings festal songs across the night, songs of triumph and of pleasure. Gowns trail and gleam; glances are exchanged; idlers, weary of their idleness, loll about, pretending indolently to savour the music. Here are only wealth and happiness; nothing is here that does not breathe and inspire carelessness and the pleasure of floating idly on the stream of life,—unless we except the rabble leaning against the outer railing where, as it watches this shining inner furnace, it hears from time to time a fragment of music; sent forth gratis at the wind's will.

There is nothing more interesting than this reflection of the pleasures of the rich in the depths of poor people's eyes. But on this day, in the midst of a crowd dressed in blouses and in calico, I saw a being whose dignity offered a curious contrast to the surrounding triviality. She was a tall, majestic woman, with so noble an air that I have never seen her equal in any collection of aristocratic beauties of the past. A perfume of lofty virtue emanated from all her person. Her face, so sad and thin, was in perfect accord with her mourning. She also, like the lower classes with whom she was standing and yet never saw, gazed on this luminous world with profound eyes, as she listened to the music, now

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and then nodding her head. A strange sight! "Certainly," I said to myself, "this poverty, if this indeed be poverty, has nothing to do with sordid avarice: so noble a face convinces me of that. Why then does she remain of her own will in the midst of that crowd when she seems so strangely out of place?" But as I curiously passed by her, I thought I found the reason. The stately widow held by the hand a child who like her was dressed in black; reasonable as was the price of admission, this money was perhaps to be used to provide a necessity for her little boy, or better yet, a superfluity, a toy.

And she went home, doubtless on foot, meditating and dreaming, alone, always alone; for children are turbulent, selfish, without sweetness and without patience; and they cannot even, like the thoroughbred animal, like dogs or cats, serve as the confidant of our lonely grief.

### XIV

#### *THE OLD MOUNTEBANK*

EVERYWHERE THE holiday crowd lolled about, made merry, and scattered in all directions. It was one of those days of ceremony to which mountebanks, acrobats, lion-tamers and wandering tradesmen, wearily look forward in the hope that they will make up for the bad seasons of the year. On such days as these it seems to me that the people forget everything, sorrow and work; they become like children. For the young it is a day of freedom, with the horror of school dismissed for twenty-four hours. For the old it is an armistice concluded with the malevolent powers of life, a respite from the universal struggle and strife. Even the man of the world and the man concerned with spiritual labours escape with difficulty the influence of this public festivity. They unwillingly absorb their share of this carefree atmosphere. As for me, like a true Parisian, I never fail to make a tour of the

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booths that are so joyously decorated on these days of official celebration.

The competition between the booths was, in fact, formidable; they howled, bellowed, bawled. There was a medley of cries, of brass detonations and of the explosion of fireworks. The grotesques and the Jocrisses convulsed the features of their tanned faces, hardened by the wind, the rain and the sun. With the self-possession of actors sure of the effect, they bandied witty phrases and jests, as solid and as ponderous as Molière's comedy. The Hercules, proud of the enormity of their limbs, with hardly any foreheads or skulls, rather like apes, strutted about majestically in tights that had been washed for the occasion only the night before. The dancing-girls, lovely as fairies or as princesses, jumped and skipped under the fire of the lanterns which covered their skirts with sparks.

All was light, dust, cries, joy, tumult; some spent, others earned; both equally joyous. Children clung to their mother's petticoats in order to obtain a sugar-stick, or climbed on their father's shoulders to have a better view of some juggler as dazzling as a god. And pervading all, dominating the perfumes, was the odour of the frying-pan which seemed to be the incense of this feast.

At the end, at the extreme end, of the row of booths, as if, shameful, he had exiled himself from all these splendours, I saw a poor mountebank, bent, broken down, decrepit, a ruin of a man, with his back against one of the posts of his shed; a shed more miserable than that of the most brutalized savage, and the distress of which two smoking and guttering candles made even more evident.

Everywhere, joy, profit, debauch; everywhere the certainty of bread for the morrow; everywhere the frenzied explosion of vitality. Here, absolute misery, misery made more horrible for being wrapped in rags whose contrasting patches, the result rather of necessity than of art, produced a comical effect. The miserable man did not laugh! He



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neither wept nor danced, nor gesticulated, nor cried; he did not sing a gay or a sorrowful song; nor did he beg. He was mute and motionless. He had given up; he had abdicated. His destiny was done.

But how profound, how unforgettable the glance he cast over the crowd and on the lights, whose moving flood stopped a few steps from his repulsive misery! I felt my throat seized by the terrible hand of hysteria, and it seemed to me that my eyes were blinded by those rebellious tears they would not surrender.

What could I do? Of what use would it be to ask the unfortunate man what curiosity, what marvel he had to show in that stinking darkness, behind his ragged curtain?

Indeed, I dared not: and though the reason for my timidity may make you laugh, I confess that I feared to humiliate him. I had just resolved to put some money on the counter as I passed, hoping that he would divine my intention, when a sudden wave of movement in the crowd, caused by I know not what disturbance, carried me away from him.

And, on my way back, obsessed by this vision, I tried to analyse my sudden sorrow, and I said to myself: "I have just seen the picture of an old man of letters who has outlived the generation which he amused with his brilliance; of an old poet without friends, without family, without children, degraded by his misery and by the ingratitude of the public, and into whose booth the forgetful world will no longer enter!"

## XV

### *THE CAKE*

I WAS travelling. The landscape in the midst of which I was seated was of an irresistible grandeur and sublimity. No doubt, at that moment, something passed from it into my soul. My thoughts fluttered with a lightness like that of the

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atmosphere: vulgar passions, such as hate and profane love, seemed to me now as far away as the clouds that floated in the chasms beneath my feet; my soul seemed to me as vast and as pure as the dome of the sky that enveloped me; the remembrance of earthly things came as faintly to my heart as the thin tinkle of the bells of unseen herds, browsing far, far away on the slope of another mountain. Across the little motionless lake, black with the darkness of its immense depth, there passed from time to time the shadow of a cloud, like the shadow of an airy giant's cloak, blown across the sky. And I remember that this rare and solemn sensation, caused by a vast and perfectly silent movement, filled me with mingled joy and fear. In a word, thanks to the enrapturing beauty about me, I felt that I was at perfect peace with myself and with the universe; I believe that in that state of beatitude and in my complete forgetfulness of all earthly evil, I had even come to think that after all those newspapers were not so ridiculous which maintained that man was born good; when, incorrigible matter renewing its exigencies, I sought to refresh my weariness and satisfy an appetite caused by so lengthy a climb. I took from my pocket a large piece of bread, a leathern cup, and a small bottle of a certain elixir which the chemists at that time sold to tourists, to be mixed, on occasion, with liquid snow.

I was quietly cutting my bread when a slight noise made me look up. Before me stood a little ragged urchin, dirty and dishevelled, whose hollow eyes, wild and supplicating, devoured the piece of bread. And I heard him gasp, in a low, hoarse voice, the word: "Cake!" I could not help laughing at the appellation with which he thought fit to honour my bread, so nearly white, and I cut off a big slice and offered it to him. Slowly he came up to me, never taking his eyes from the coveted object; then, snatching it out of my hand, he stepped back quickly, as if he feared that my offer was not sincere, or that I had already repented of it.

But at the same instant he was knocked over by another

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little savage who had sprung from I know not where, and who was so exactly like the first that one might have taken them for twin brothers. They rolled over on the ground together, struggling for the possession of the precious prize, neither apparently willing to share it with his brother. The first, exasperated, clutched the second by the hair; the latter seized his brother's ear between his teeth, and spat out a little bloody piece with a superb oath in dialect. The legitimate proprietor of the cake tried to hook his little claws into the usurper's eyes; the latter, in turn, did his best to throttle his adversary with one hand, while with the other he endeavoured to slip the prize of war into his pocket. But, heartened by despair, the loser pulled himself together, and sent the victor sprawling with a blow of the head in his stomach. Why describe a hideous fight which indeed lasted longer than their childish strength seemed to promise? The cake travelled from hand to hand, and changed from pocket to pocket, at every moment; but, alas! it changed also in size; and when at length, exhausted, panting and bleeding, they stopped from the sheer impossibility of continuing, there was no longer any cause for the feud; the slice of bread had disappeared, and lay scattered in crumbs like the grains of sand with which it was mingled.

This sight had darkened the landscape for me, and dispelled the joyous calm in which my soul had been basking; I remained saddened for quite a long time, saying over and over to myself: "There is, then, a wonderful country in which bread is called cake, and is so rare a delicacy that it is enough to cause a literally fratricidal war!"

## XVI

### *THE CLOCK*

THE CHINESE tell time by looking at the eyes of cats. One day a missionary, wandering in the environs of Nankin,

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noticed that he had forgotten his watch, and asked a small boy what time it was. The child of the Celestial Empire hesitated; after a moment he replied: "I shall tell you." Almost immediately afterwards he returned, holding in his arms a very fat cat, and, to use a colloquial expression, gazing into the whites of its eyes, he affirmed without hesitation: "It is not quite noon." Which was true.

As for me, if I lean towards my fair Féline, so felicitously named, who is at once the honour of her sex, the pride of my heart and the perfume of my spirit, whether at night or by day, in sunshine or in opaque darkness, I always distinctly see the hour in the depths of her adorable eyes, always the same hour, vast, solemn, great as space, without division of minutes or of seconds—a motionless hour not marked on any clock, and yet which is as light as a sigh, as swift as a glance.

And if some intruder were to disturb me while my gaze rested on this charming dial, if some rude and intolerant genie, some Demon of ill omen came to me and said: "What do you gaze at so searchingly? What do you seek in the eyes of this being? Do you see the hour there, prodigal and idle mortal?" I should reply without hesitation: "Yes, I see the hour: it is Eternity!"

Is not this, Madame, a truly praiseworthy madrigal and as full of affectation as your precious self? In truth, it has given me so much pleasure to embroider this pretentious compliment, that I shall ask nothing from you in exchange.

## XVII

### *A HEMISPHERE IN TRESSES*

LET ME inhale slowly, slowly, the odour of your hair, let me plunge my face into it like a man who thirsts and drinks the waters of a spring, let me wave your tresses with my hand like a perfumed handkerchief, shaking out my mem-

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ories in the air. If you could but know all that I see, all that I feel, all that I hear in your hair! My soul wanders over its perfume as the souls of other men wander over music.

Your hair contains a dream, filled with masts and sails; it contains the wide seas whose monsoons carry me towards happy climes, where the sky is more blue and more profound, where the atmosphere is perfumed by fruits, and leaves and the skin of human beings.

In the ocean of your tresses, I see a harbour swarming with melancholy chants, with vigorous men of all nations, and with ships of all types, defining their delicate and complicated architecture on an immense sky vibrating with eternal heat.

In the caresses of your tresses, I live again the languor of long hours spent on a divan, in the lounge of a beautiful ship, lulled by the imperceptible motion of the harbour, between pots of flowers and refreshing water-jars.

In the passionate warmth of your tresses, I inhale the odour of tobacco mixed with the odour of opium and of sugar; in the night of your tresses, I see shine the infinity of the tropical azure; on the downy shores of your tresses, I am intoxicated by the mingled odours of tar, musk and cocoa-oil.

Let me slowly bite your heavy black hair. When I nibble at your flexible and rebellious tresses, it seems to me that I am feeding upon memories.

## XVIII

### *L'INVITATION AU VOYAGE*

THERE IS a wonderful land, a land of Cockaigne, they say, which I dream of visiting with an old friend. It is a strange land, lost in the mists of our North; it might be called the East of the West, the China of Europe, so freely does a warm and capricious fancy flourish there, so patiently and



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persistently has that fancy illustrated it with rare and delicate vegetation.

A real land of Cockaigne, where everything is beautiful, rich, quiet, genuine; where order holds up the mirror to luxury; where life is rich, and sweet to breathe; where disorder, tumult, and the unexpected are shut out; where happiness is wedded to silence; where even cooking is poetic, rich and highly flavoured all at once; where everything, dear love, is made in your image.

You know that feverish sickness which comes over us in our stark miseries, that nostalgia for unknown lands, that anguish of curiosity? There is a country made in your image, where all is beautiful, rich, quiet, and genuine; where fancy has built and decorated a western China, where life is sweet to breathe, where happiness is wedded to silence. It is there that we should live, it is there that we should die!

Yes, it is there that we should breathe, dream, and draw out the hours with an infinity of sensations. A musician has written an "Invitation à la Valse": who will be the one to compose the "Invitation au Voyage" that we can offer to the beloved, to the chosen sister?

Yes, it would be good to live in this atmosphere, where slower hours contain more thoughts, where clocks strike happiness with a deeper and more significant solemnity.

On shining panels, or on gilded leather of a sombre richness, discreetly repose the impassive pictures, calm and deep as the souls of the painters who created them. The sunsets which so richly colour the walls of dining-room and drawing-room, are sifted through beautiful hangings or through tall wrought windows, leaded into many panes. The furniture is large, strange, and fantastic, provided with locks and secrets like subtle souls. Mirrors, metals, fabrics, pottery and the art of the goldsmith, play for the eyes a mute and mysterious symphony; and from all things, from every corner, from the cracks of drawers and from the folds of draperies,

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there emanates a singular odour, a "forget-me-not" of Sumatra, which is, as it were, the soul of that dwelling.

A real land of Cockaigne, I tell you, where all is beautiful, clean, and shining, like a clear conscience, like a bright array of kitchen copper, like splendid jewelry, like variegated gems. All the treasures of the world have found their way there, as into the house of a hard-working man to whom the whole world is indebted. Strange country, excelling others as Art excels Nature, where Nature is refashioned by dreams, where she is corrected, embellished, remoulded.

Let the alchemists of horticulture seek and seek again, let them set ever further and further back the boundaries to their happiness! Let them offer prizes of sixty and of a hundred thousand florins to him who will solve their ambitious problems! For me, I have found my "black tulip" and my "blue dahlia!"

Incomparable flower, recovered tulip, allegoric dahlia, it is there, is it not, in that beautiful country, so calm and so full of dreams, that you should live and flower? There, would you not be framed within your own analogy, and would you not see yourself reflected, as the mystics say, in your own "correspondence"?

Dreams, always dreams! and the more delicate and ambitious the soul, the further do dreams estrange it from possible things. Each man carries within himself his natural dose of opium, ceaselessly secreted and renewed, and, from birth to death, how many hours can we reckon of positive pleasure, of successful and decided action? Shall we ever live in, shall we ever pass into, that picture which my mind has painted, that picture made in your image?

These treasures, this furniture, this luxury, this order, these perfumes, these miraculous flowers, are you. They are you, too, these great rivers and these quiet canals. These vast ships that drift down them, laden with riches, and from whose decks rise the monotonous songs of labouring sailors, they are my thoughts which slumber or rise and fall on your

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breast. You lead them gently towards the sea, which is the infinite, while mirroring the depths of the sky in the crystal clearness of your soul; and when, weary of the surge and sated with the products of the East, they return to their port of birth, it is still my thoughts, now enriched, that return to you from the infinite.

### XIX

#### *THE POOR BOY'S TOY*

I WANT to suggest an innocent diversion. There are so few amusements which are not sinful! When you go out in the morning with the evident intention of sauntering along the highways, fill your pockets with little penny toys—such as the flat Polichinelle who is moved by a single wire, the Blacksmith who strikes the anvil, the horseman and his horse whose tail is a whistle—and beside the taverns, under the trees, bestow your gifts upon the poor unknown children whom you will meet. You will see their eyes open wide. At first they will not dare to take it; they will doubt their happiness. Then their hands will suddenly snatch the gift, and they will take to their heels like cats that go a long way off to eat the morsel you have given them, having learned to be mistrustful of men.

On a road, behind the railings of a vast garden, at the end of which appeared the white walls of a pretty, sunlit château, a handsome, rosy-cheeked boy stood, dressed in those country clothes that are so full of daintiness. The luxury, the freedom from care, the habitual sight of riches, make these children so pretty that one might believe they were made of a different composition than the children of mediocrity or of poverty.

There lay on the ground beside him a splendid toy, as fresh as its owner, polished, gilded, dressed in a purple robe, covered with feathers and glass beads. But the child was

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not interested in his favourite toy, and this is what he gazed at: on the other side of the railing, in the road, between the thistles and the nettles, there stood another boy, thin, dirty, sooty, one of those outcast brats in whom an impartial eye could discover beauty, if, like the eyes of the connoisseur that suspect an ideal picture under the coating of carriage varnish, one were to remove the disgusting patina of misery.

Through these symbolical bars separating two worlds, the high road and the château, the poor boy showed the rich boy his own toy, which the latter examined greedily as if it were a rare and unknown object. (Now, this toy, that the little sloven teased, disturbed and shook inside a wired box, was a living rat! His parents, through economy, no doubt, had taken the toy from life itself.) And the two children, laughing at one another fraternally, displayed teeth of an equal whiteness.

## XX

### *THE GIFTS OF THE FAIRIES*

THERE WAS a great assembly of the Fairies, convoked for the purpose of distributing gifts among all the babes new-born within the previous twenty-four hours.

These ancient and capricious Sisters of Destiny, these strange Mothers of Joy and of Sorrow, were very diverse: some had a sombre, sulky aspect, others looked mischievous and frolicsome; some were young, and had always been young; others were old, and had always been old.

All fathers who had faith in Fairies had come, each carrying his new-born babe in his arms.

The Gifts, the Talents, Good Luck, Invincible Circumstances, all were heaped beside the tribunal like prizes on the platform at commencement time. The difference here

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was that the Gifts were not the recompense for some effort, but on the contrary, were a favour granted to a person who had not yet lived, a favour that might determine his destiny and become quite as much the source of his misery as of his happiness.

The poor Fairies were very excited, for there was a great crowd of petitioners; and the intermediate world, placed between Man and God, is just as subject as we are to the terrible law of Time and its vast progeny, the Days, the Hours, the Minutes, the Seconds.

As a matter of fact, they were just as bewildered as Ministers on court day, or as clerks in the government pawnshops when a national holiday authorises the gratuitous return of articles in pawn. I even believe that they looked from time to time at the hands of the clock with as much impatience as those human judges who, seated on the Bench since early morning, cannot keep from dreaming of their dinner, their family and their beloved slippers. If, in supernatural justice, there is a little precipitation and chance, we must not be astonished to find that the same may be true of human justice. We, ourselves, should be unjust judges in such a case.

So on this day certain strange blunders were committed, which we might consider strange if prudence, rather than caprice, were a distinctive, eternal characteristic of Fairies. Thus the power of magnetically attracting fortune was bestowed upon the sole heir of a very wealthy family, who, not having been gifted with any sense of charity, nor with any great desire for the most obvious of the material things of life, was, later, to find himself prodigiously embarrassed by his millions.

Thus the love of Beauty and poetic Power were given to the son of a melancholy wretch, a quarryman by trade, who could not, in any fashion, aid the talent, nor relieve the needs of his deplorable progeny.



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I have forgotten to tell you that the distribution, on these solemn occasions, is without redress, and that no gift can ever be refused.

All the Fairies had arisen, believing their toilsome task was done; there remained not a single gift, not a single largesse to throw to all this small fry, when an honest fellow, a poor little tradesman he was, I believe, rose up and seizing the Fairy nearest to him by her robe of multi-coloured vapours, cried: "Oh, Madam! You have forgotten us! There's still my little boy! I don't want to have come here for nothing."

The Fairy might have been embarrassed, for nothing more was left. However, she remembered in time a well known law, which is rarely applied in the supernatural world inhabited by the Fairies, the Gnomes, the Salamanders, the Sylphides, the Sylphs, the Nixes, the Water-sprites, those impalpable Deities, friends of man, who are often constrained to adapt themselves to his passions—I mean that law which concedes to Fairies in similar cases, that is to say when the supply of gifts is exhausted, the faculty of still giving one additional and exceptional gift, always providing that she have sufficient imagination to create it immediately.

So the good Fairy replied, with a self-possession worthy of her rank: "I give your son—I give him—the *Gift of pleasing!*"

"But please how? Please? Please why?" obstinately demanded the little shopkeeper, who was doubtless one of those reasoners, so commonly heard, who are incapable of grasping the logic of the Absurd.

"Because! because!" replied the enraged Fairy, turning her back on him; and rejoining the retinue of her companions, she said to them: "What do you think of this vain little Frenchman who wants to understand everything, and who, having obtained for his son the best of the Gifts, dares to question and to discuss the Indisputable?"

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### XXI

#### *THE TEMPTATIONS, OR EROS AND PLUTO AND GLORY*

LAST NIGHT, two superb Satans and a She-Devil, no less extraordinary, ascended the mysterious staircase by which Hell assaults Man's weakness while he sleeps, and secretly communicates with him. And they came and stood gloriously before me, upright, as if on a platform. A sulphurous splendour emanated from these three personages, and they stood out against the opaque background of night. They looked so proud and so dominating, that at first sight I took the three of them for real Gods.

The face of the first Satan was of an ambiguous sex; the lines of his body had the softness of the ancient Bacchus. His large languishing eyes, of a dark and uncertain colour, were like violets still wet with the heavy tears of the storm, and his half-opened lips were warm incense burners exhaling rich perfumes; and whenever he sighed, the warmth of his breath enkindled the aromatic insects fluttering about.

Around his purple tunic was corded, like a girdle, a glistening serpent which, with lifted head, languorously turned towards him eyes like embers. From this living girdle were hung shining knives and surgical instruments, alternating with phials filled with sinister liquors. In his right hand he held another phial which contained something luminously red, and which had for label these strange words: "Drink, this is my blood, a perfect cordial"; in his left, a violin which he doubtless played to express his sorrows and his pleasures, and to spread abroad the contagion of his folly at the midnight *Sabbats*. From his delicate ankles trailed several links of a broken chain of gold, and when the consequent annoyance made him lower his gaze, with intense vanity he

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contemplated his toe nails, brilliant and gleaming like well-polished stones. He gazed on me with eyes full of inconsolable hurt, eyes from which flowed an insidious intoxication, and he said to me in a singing voice: "If you wish, if you wish, I shall make you the lord of souls, and you shall be master of living matter, even more than the sculptor can be master of clay: and you shall know the pleasure, forever reborn, of escaping from yourself to find oblivion in others, and of attracting other souls until they are lost in yours."

And I answered him: "Ever so many thanks! I don't want this precious lot of beings who, no doubt, are no better than my poor little self. Although I can remember some shameful things, I don't want to forget anything; and even if I would not recognize you, you old monster, your mysterious cutlery, your doubtful phials, the chains with which your feet are entangled, are symbols which explain clearly enough the inconveniences of your friendship. Keep your presents."

The second Satan had none of this tragic and smiling aspect, none of these beautiful insinuating manners, none of this delicate and perfumed beauty. He was a large man, with a fat face and no eyes; his heavy paunch hung down over his thighs, and every inch of his skin was gilded and covered, like a tattooing, with a crowd of little moving figures representing the numerous forms of universal misery. There were little emaciated men who were deliberately hanging themselves from a nail: there were thin, deformed little gnomes whose supplicating eyes implored alms even more eloquently than their trembling hands; and old mothers, who carried abortions that clung to their withered breasts. And there were many others.

The fat Satan tapped his immense belly with his fist, and it gave forth a long, resounding clash of metal, that died away to a vague moaning uttered by countless human voices. He laughed, impudently showing his bad teeth, an enormous,

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idiotic laugh like that of certain men the world over after they have dined too well.

And this one said to me: "I can give you that which obtains all, that which is worth all, that which replaces all." And tapping his monstrous belly, the sonorous echoes provided a commentary on his coarse speech.

I turned away from him in disgust, and I replied: "To be happy, I don't require the misfortune of others; and I don't want riches burdened with all the miseries pictured on your skin like wallpaper."

As for the She-Devil, I should lie if I did not confess that at first sight I found in her a bizarre charm. To describe this charm, I can compare it to nothing better than the faded beauty of women who never seem to age further, and whose loveliness has all the poignant magic of ruins. She seemed haughty yet awkward, and her eyes, though tired, had a fascinating power. What struck me most was the mystery of her voice, in which I recognized the most beautiful *contralti* tones and also a little of that hoarseness caused by incessant drinking of brandy.

"Do you want to know my power?" said the false goddess in her charming and paradoxical voice. "Listen." She put to her mouth a gigantic trumpet, beribboned like a reed-pipe with the names of all the newspapers of the universe, and into this trumpet she shouted my name, which rolled across space with the sound of a thousand thunders, and returned to me in a reverberating echo from the most distant planet.

"The Devil!" I cried, almost won over. "Here is something valuable!" But upon looking more closely at the seductive virago, I seemed vaguely to remember her as one whom I had seen clinking glasses with some scoundrels of my acquaintance; and the raucous sound of the brass brought to my ears I know not what memory of a prostituted trumpet.

So I answered with utter disdain: "Go! I'm not one who will take to wife the mistress of certain men whose names I prefer not to mention."

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Certainly I had every reason to be proud of so courageous an abnegation. But unfortunately I awakened, and all my strength left me. "In truth," said I to myself, "I must have been slumbering heavily to have shown such scruples. Ah! if they would return when I am awake, I wouldn't be so fastidious." And I invoked them in a loud voice, begging them to pardon me, offering to dishonour myself as often as need be in order to deserve their favours; but I must have deeply offended them, for they have never returned.

### XXII

#### ( *EVENING TWILIGHT* )

THE DAY is over. A great restfulness pervades those poor minds wearied by the day's work, and their thoughts now take on the dim and tender colours of twilight.

Nevertheless from the mountain top there comes to my balcony, through the transparent clouds of evening, a great clamour, made up of a multitude of discordant cries, that distance changes to a mournful harmony, like that of the rising tide or of a brewing storm.

Who are the hapless ones to whom evening brings no calm; to whom, as to the owls, the coming of night is the signal for a witches' sabbat? This sinister ululation comes to me from the dark house of refuge on the mountain; and, in the evening, as I smoke, and behold the quiet of the immense valley, filled with houses, each of whose windows seem to say, "Here is peace, here is domestic happiness!" I can, when the wind blows from the heights, lull my astonished thought with this imitation of the harmonies of hell.

Twilight excites madmen. I remember I had two friends who were made quite ill by the twilight. One of them ignored all the social and friendly amenities, and flew at the first-comer like a savage. I have seen him throw at a waiter's head an excellent chicken, in which he imagined he



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had discovered some insulting hieroglyph. Evening, har-binger of profound delights, spoilt for him the most succulent things.

The other, a prey to thwarted ambition, became more bitter, more gloomy, more troublesome as the daylight dwindled. Kindly and sociable by day, he was pitiless in the evening; and it was not only on others, but also on himself, that he vented the rage of his twilight mania.

The first died insane, unable to recognize his wife and child; the second is still the restless victim of a perpetual disquietude; and, if all the honours that republics and princes can confer were heaped upon him, I believe that the twilight would still quicken in him a burning desire for imaginary distinctions. Night, which filled their minds with its own darkness, brings a light to mine; and, though it is by no means rare for the same cause to bring about two opposite results, I am always, as it were, perplexed and alarmed by it.

O night! O refreshing darkness! You summon me to an inner feast, you deliver me from my anguish! In the solitude of the plains, in the stony labyrinths of some capital, twinkling of stars or sputtering out of street-lamps, you are the fireworks of the goddess Liberty!

Twilight, how gentle you are and how tender! The rosy glow that still lingers on the horizon, like the last agony of day under the conquering oppression of night; the flaring candle-flames that stain with dull red the last glories of the sunset; the heavy draperies that an invisible hand draws out of the depths of the East, all these resemble those complex feelings that war on one another in the heart of man at the solemn moments of life.

Would you not say it was like one of those strange costumes worn by dancers, in which the veiled beauties show through the dark and transparent guaze of a gorgeous skirt, as the happy past pierces through the darkness of the present? And the wavering stars of gold and silver with

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which it is spangled, are they not those fires of fancy which only blaze well against the deep mourning of night?

### XXIII

#### *SOLITUDE*

A PHILANTHROPIC journalist tells me that solitude is bad for a man; and in support of his contention, he quotes, as unbelievers always do, the words of the Church Fathers. I am aware that the Demon likes to frequent barren country, and that the Spirit of murder and of lubricity becomes extraordinarily inflamed in solitary places. Yet it is possible that solitude might be dangerous only for those idle and wandering souls who people it with their Chimeras and their passions. It is certain that a talkative man, whose supreme pleasure consists in speaking from a pulpit or from a platform, would seriously run the risk of becoming stark mad on Robinson Crusoe's island. I do not insist that my journalist possess all of Crusoe's courageous virtues, but I do say that he must not issue a writ of accusation against the lovers of solitude and of mystery.

There are individuals in our chattering races who would accept the supreme punishment with less repugnance if they were allowed to make a long oration from the scaffold without fear of an untimely interruption by the drums of *Santerre*. I do not pity them, because I suspect that their oratorical effusions give them as much pleasure as is found by others in silence and in meditation; only I despise them.

I desire above all that my accursed journalist let me amuse myself in my own way. "Don't you ever feel the need of sharing your pleasures?" he asked me in that very nasal and apostolic tone. You see how subtly envious he is! He knows that I disdain his, and he thrusts himself into mine, the miserable spoil-sport!

"The tragedy of not being able to be alone!" says La

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Bruyère somewhere, as if to shame those who rush into a crowd to forget themselves, in the fear, no doubt, that their own loneliness will prove unbearable.

"Almost all our misery comes from not having been able to keep to our own room," said another wise man, Pascal, I believe, who thus summons to meditation in their cells all those distracted people who seek happiness in activity and in a form of prostitution I might call Fraternity, if I wanted to speak the beautiful language of my time.

### XXIV

#### PLANS

HE SAID to himself, as he wandered about in a great and lonely park: "How beautiful she would be in an elaborate and stately court dress, descending the marble steps of a palace, opposite great lawns and fountains, and seen through the atmosphere of a lovely night. For she has the natural air of a princess."

Later, while passing along a street, he stopped before a picture shop, and finding in a folio a print of a tropical landscape, he said to himself: "No! It's not in a palace that I wish to possess her. We wouldn't feel at home there. Besides, the walls covered with gold would leave no room to hang her picture; in those solemn galleries there would not be a single cosy corner. Surely, it is *here* that I should live to cultivate my life-dream."

And, while studying the details of the print, he continued mentally: "At the seashore, a lovely wood cabin, surrounded by all those fantastic and shining trees whose names I have forgotten; in the air, an intoxicating, indefinable odour; in the cabin, a powerful perfume of rose and of musk; in the distance, behind our little domain, the tops of the masts rising and falling on the swell; around us, beyond the

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room full of rosy light filtering through the blinds, a room strewn with fresh mats and heavily scented flowers, with rare couches of a Portuguese rococo, made of a heavy, dark wood (where she would lie, so serene, so carefully fanned, smoking a faintly opiumed tobacco!), and beyond the timbered floor, the noisy twittering of birds intoxicated with the light, and the idle chatter of little negresses; and at night, as an accompaniment to my dreams, the plaintive songs of the melodious trees, the sighs of the melancholy cassowary! Yes, here surely is the setting I seek. What have I to do with palaces?"

And farther on, as he was walking along a wide avenue, he saw a neat little inn, where two laughing girls were leaning from a window brightly hung with checkered calico curtains. And at once he said to himself: "My thought must be a great vagabond since it went so far to seek what is so near. Pleasure and happiness can be found in the first inn one comes to, in the inn discovered by chance, and so full of delights. A roaring fire, colourful earthenware, a fair supper, a strong wine, and a very wide bed with sheets a bit rough, but fresh. What could be better?"

Returning home alone, at the hour when wisdom's advice can be heard above the buzz of activity, he said to himself: "I have had, today, in my dreams, three dwelling places in which I found equal pleasure. Why compel my body to move about, since my soul travels so easily? And what is the use of carrying out any plan, since the plan in itself is sufficient joy?"

## XXV

### *THE FAIR DOROTHY*

THE SUN overwhelms the town with its direct and terrible light; the sand is dazzling, and the sea glitters. The torpid world sinks feebly into its siesta, a siesta which is a kind

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of savourous death and during which the drowsy sleeper enjoys the exquisite sensation of annihilation.

Yet Dorothy, strong and proud as the sun, moves through the deserted street, a gleaming, black blot on the light, the only living creature at this hour, under the wide sky. As she advances, her slender waist indolently sways above her full hips. Her clinging dress of bright and rose coloured silk, contrasts vividly with her dark complexion, and moulds her tall form, the curve of her back and her pointed breasts. Her red parasol, sifts the light and, casts over her dark face the blood red rouge of its reflection. The weight of her abundant blue-black tresses bends her delicate head backward and gives her an idle and triumphant air. Heavy earrings tinkle faintly in her tiny ears. From time to time the sea breeze lifts a corner of her loose skirt and uncovers her superb shining limbs; and her feet, like the feet of a marble goddess hidden in some European museum, leave their faithful imprint on the fine sand. For Dorothy is so great a coquette that the pleasure of being admired means more to her than pride in her freedom and, although she is free, she walks without slippers.

She moves forward gracefully, full of the joy of life, and smiling as if she perceived far off in space a mirror reflecting her bearing and her beauty. At this hour when even the dogs whimper with pain under the biting sun, what strong impulse thus bestirs our indolent Dorothy, fair and cold as bronze? Why has she left her little cabin, so daintily furnished: where flowers and mats make a perfect boudoir at so little cost; where she takes such pleasure in combing her hair, in smoking, in being fanned or in looking at herself in the mirror of her great feathered fans, while the sea, which breaks on the shore a short distance away, provides a powerful, monotonous accompaniment to her vague reveries, and while the iron pot in which a ragoût of crabs with rice and saffron is being cooked at the far end of the court-yard, wafts to her its exciting perfume?



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Perhaps she has an assignation with some young officer, who, in other lands, has heard his comrades speak of the famous Dorothy. Unquestionably the simple creature will implore him to describe the ball at the opera, and she will ask him whether she could go there with bare feet, just as she goes to the Sunday dances, where even the old Kaffir women become intoxicated and mad with joy; and also if the beautiful women of Paris are all more beautiful than she.

Dorothy is admired and petted by everyone, and she would be perfectly happy if she were not obliged to hoard piastre after piastre in order to ransom her little sister, who is at least eleven and already ripe, and so lovely! Kind Dorothy will no doubt succeed; the child's master is so miserly, far too miserly to conceive of any other beauty than that of gold pieces!

### XXVI

#### *THE EYES OF THE POOR*

AH! you want to know why I hate you to-day. It will probably be less easy for you to understand than for me to explain it to you; for you are, I think, the most perfect example of feminine impenetrability that could possibly be found.

We had spent a long day together, and it had seemed short to me. We had promised one another that we would think the same thoughts and that our two souls would become one soul; a dream which is not original, after all, except that, dreamed by all men, it has come true for none.

In the evening you were a little tired, and you sat down outside a new café, at the corner of a new boulevard, still littered with plaster yet already proudly displaying its unfinished splendours. The café glittered. The very gas-jet burned with the ardour of a beginner, and sturdily illu-

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minated the blinding whiteness of the walls, the dazzling glass in the mirrors, the gilt of the cornices and mouldings, the chubby-cheeked pages leading hounds straining at the leash, the ladies laughing at the falcons on their wrists, the nymphs and goddesses carrying fruits and pies and game on their heads, the Hebes and Ganymedes holding out at arm's-length little jars of bavaroise or parti-coloured obelisks of mixed ices: all history and all mythology was here placed at the service of the gourmand. Right before us, in the roadway, stood a man of about forty years of age, with a weary face and a greyish beard, holding a little boy by one hand and carrying on the other arm a child too weak to walk. He was acting as nurse-maid, and had brought his children out for their evening walk. All three were in rags. Their faces were extraordinarily serious, and the six eyes stared fixedly at the new café with the same admiration, yet manifested differently in each according to his age.

The father's eyes said: "How beautiful! how beautiful! One would think that all the gold in this poor world had found its way to those walls." The boy's eyes said: "How beautiful! how beautiful! But it's a house which people like us cannot enter." As for the little one's eyes, they were too fascinated to express anything but stupid and utter joy.

Song-writers say that pleasure ennobles the soul and softens the heart. The song was right that evening, so far as I was concerned. Not only was I deeply moved by this family of eyes, but I felt rather ashamed of our glasses and decanters, which were so much larger than our thirst. I turned to look at you, dear love, that I might read my own thoughts in you; I was gazing deep into your eyes, so beautiful and so strangely sweet, your green eyes that are the home of Caprice and under the sovereignty of the Moon, when you said to me: "I can't stand those people staring with eyes like saucers! Couldn't you tell the head waiter to send them away?"

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So hard it is to understand one another, dearest, and so incommunicable is thought, even between people who are in love!

### XXVII

#### *AN HEROIC DEATH*

FANCIOLLE WAS an admirable buffoon, and almost a friend of the Prince. But for persons professionally devoted to the comic, serious matters have a fatal attraction, and, although it may seem strange that ideas of patriotism and liberty should despotically seize upon the brain of a player, one day Fancioulle joined a conspiracy formed by some discontented nobles.

There are respectable men everywhere who will go to the authorities and denounce those individuals of atrabilious disposition who seek to depose princes, and reconstitute society without consulting it. The lords in question were arrested, together with Fancioulle, and doomed to certain death.

I could readily believe that the Prince was almost sorry to find his favourite actor among the rebels. The Prince was neither better nor worse than any other prince; but an excessive sensibility caused him to be, in many cases, more cruel and more despotic than his equals. Passionately enamoured of the fine arts, moreover an excellent connoisseur, he had an insatiable desire for pleasure. Indifferent enough in regard to men and morals, himself a true artist, he feared no enemy but Ennui. Had the writing of anything which did not tend exclusively to pleasure, or to wonder, which is one of the most delicate forms of pleasure, been permitted in his domain, the extravagant efforts that he made to flee or to vanquish this tyrant of the world would certainly have earned for him, from some stern historian, the epithet of "monster." This Prince's great misfortune was that he had no theatre vast enough for his genius. There

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are young Neros who stifle within too narrow confines, and whose names and good intentions will never be known to future ages. Providence lacked foresight when she gave this one faculties greater than his dominions.

Suddenly the rumour spread that the sovereign had decided to pardon all the conspirators; and the origin of this rumour was the announcement of a special performance in which Fancioulle would play one of his best rôles, and at which even the condemned nobles, it was said, were to be present,—an evident sign, added shallow minds, of the generous tendencies of the offended Prince.

From a man so naturally and wilfully eccentric, anything was possible, even virtue, or mercy, especially if he could hope to find in it some unexpected pleasure. But to those who, like myself, had succeeded in penetrating further into the depths of this sick and curious soul, it was infinitely more probable that the Prince wished to estimate the theatrical ability of a man condemned to death. He wanted to take advantage of the occasion and make a physiological experiment of *capital* interest, to discover to what extent the usual faculties of an artist could be changed or modified by the extraordinary situation in which he found himself. Whether, beyond this, he had made up his mind to show mercy is a point which has never been determined.

At last, the great day arrived, and the little court displayed all its pomp; and it would be difficult to conceive, without having seen it, what splendour the privileged classes of a little state with limited resources can display on a really solemn occasion. And this occasion was doubly solemn, both for the wondrous exhibition of luxury, and for the mysterious and moral interest involved.

The Sieur Fancioulle was especially fine in parts either silent or little burdened with words, such as are often the principal ones in those fairy plays which aim to represent symbolically the mystery of life. He came upon the stage lightly and with perfect ease, which in itself lent some sup-

port, in the minds of the nobles in the audience, to the idea of kindness and forgiveness.

When we say of an actor, "There is a good actor," we are using a formula which implies that under the character-part we can still distinguish the actor, that is to say, art, effort, will. Now, if an actor should succeed in being, in relation to the character which it is his business to portray, what the finest statues of antiquity, miraculously animated, living, walking, seeing, would be in relation to the general, confused idea of beauty, this would be, undoubtedly, a singular and unheard-of case. Fancioulle that evening, was, a perfect idealisation, which it was difficult not to suppose living, possible, real. As the buffoon came and went, as he laughed, wept, and was convulsed, there was an indestructible aureole about his head, an aureole invisible to all, but visible to me, in which were strangely blended the rays of art and a martyr's glory. Fancioulle, by I know not what special grace, introduced something divine and supernatural into even the most extravagant buffooneries. My pen trembles, and an emotion I still feel brings tears to my eyes, as I try to describe to you this never-to-be-forgotten evening. Fancioulle proved to me, in a peremptory, irrefutable manner, that the intoxication of art is better qualified than aught else to veil the terrors of the gulf; that genius can act on the brink of the grave with a joy that makes it lose all sight of the grave, living, as it does, in a paradise where any thought of destruction and of the grave can never enter.

The entire audience, *blasé* and frivolous as it was, soon fell under the all-powerful sway of the artist. Not a thought remained of death, of mourning, or of torture. They all blissfully surrendered to the manifold delights that are felt when in the presence of a masterpiece of living art. Manifestations of joy and of admiration repeatedly shook the walls of the building with the fury of continuous thunder. The Prince himself ecstatically joined in the applause of the court.



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Nevertheless, to a discerning eye, his emotion was not un-mixed. Did he feel defeated in his power as a despot? humiliated in his art of striking terror into hearts, and chill into souls? frustrated in his hopes and deceived in his conjectures? Such suppositions, not exactly justified, yet not absolutely unjustifiable, passed through my mind as I watched the face of the Prince. A new pallor slowly overspread his habitually pale features, as snow overspreads snow. His lips became more tightly compressed, and his eyes lighted up with an inner fire like that of jealousy or of spite, while he ostensibly applauded the talents of his old friend, the strange buffoon, who jested so well with death. At a certain moment, I saw his Highness turn towards a little page, stationed behind him, and whisper in his ear. The roguish face of the pretty child lit up with a smile, and he quickly left the Prince's box, as if to execute some urgent command.

A few minutes later a shrill, prolonged hiss interrupted Fancioulle in one of his greatest moments, and rent alike every ear and heart. And from the corner of the theatre, from whence this unexpected note of disapproval had sounded, a child darted into a corridor, stifling his laughter.

Fancioulle, shaken, roused out of his dream, closed his eyes, re-opened them almost immediately, extraordinarily wide, then opened his mouth as if to breath convulsively, staggered forward a few steps, backward a few steps, then fell to the boards, stark dead.

Had the hiss, swift as a sword, really cheated the hangman? Had the Prince himself suspected the perfectly murderous efficacy of his ruse? We may doubt it. Did he regret his dear and inimitable Fancioulle? It is sweet and but right to believe so.

The guilty nobles attended a play for the last time. That same night they were effaced from life.

Since then, many mimes, rightly appreciated in different countries, have played before the court of \* \* \*; but none of

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them has ever been able to recall to mind the marvellous talents of Fancioulle, or to attain the same *favour*.

### XXVIII

#### *THE COUNTERFEIT COIN*

As we walked away from a tobacco shop, my friend sorted his money very carefully; he slipped the small gold coins into the left pocket of his waistcoat; into the right, the silver coins; into the left pocket of his trousers, a lot of coppers; and finally, into the right, a silver two-franc-piece he had particularly examined. "A strange, minute distribution!" I said to myself. On our way, we met a poor man who held out his cap to us with a trembling hand. I know nothing more disturbing than the mute eloquence of those supplicating eyes, in which the sensitive man who knows how to read can find so much humility and so much reproach. He will see in the tearful eyes of a whipped dog this same deep and complex emotion. My friend's donation was much larger than mine, and I said to him: "You are right; once we ourselves have had the pleasure of being astonished there is no greater pleasure than that of causing surprise to others." "I gave him the counterfeit coin," he quietly replied, as if to justify his prodigality.

My poor mind, always looking for difficulties where there are none (what a tiresome faculty nature has given me!), suddenly conceived the idea that my friend's action was prompted by a desire to make this an eventful moment in the life of this poor devil, and perhaps also to learn the various consequences, either fatal or otherwise, which might result from a counterfeit coin being found in a beggar's possession. Might it not be multiplied into real coins? Might it not also be the cause of his imprisonment? A

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baker, a tavern-keeper, for instance, might have him arrested as a counterfeiter or for circulating counterfeit money. And it was possible, too, that the coin might become, for some poor little speculator, the nucleus of a fortune that would quickly vanish. And so played my fantasy, lending wings to my friend's thought, and drawing all possible conclusions from all possible hypothesis.

Suddenly he interrupted my reverie by repeating my own words: "Yes, you are right; there's no greater pleasure than that of surprising a man by giving him more than he expects."

I looked straight into his eyes, and I was terrified to see that they shone with unmistakable candour. I saw then clearly that he had wanted to be charitable and, at the same time, make a good deal; to win forty *sous* and the Kingdom of Heaven; to get into paradise thriftily; to acquire without expense the reputation of being a charitable man. I might almost have pardoned in him the desire for that criminal experience I had attributed to him but a short while ago; I might have found it curious, singular, that he should amuse himself by implicating the poor; but I shall never forgive the absurdity of his motive. There is no excuse for being wicked, but there is some merit in knowing that one is wicked; and the most irreparable vice is to do evil through sheer stupidity.

### XXIX

#### *THE GENEROUS GAMBLER*

YESTERDAY, WHILE sauntering with the crowd on the boulevard, I felt a mysterious Being brush past me whom I had always wanted to know, and whom I recognized immediately, in spite of the fact that I had never seen him. He had, doubtless, a similar desire about me, for he gave me, in

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passing, a significant wink which I hastened to obey. I carefully followed him, and was soon descending behind him into a subterranean dwelling, furnished with dazzling luxury without parallel among any of the superior Parisian homes. It seemed strange to me that I could have passed that delightful retreat so often without discovering the entrance. An exquisite, an almost intoxicating atmosphere prevailed, which made one forget almost instantly all the dull horrors of life; here one breathed a sombre beatitude, like that which the lotus eaters must have known, when, set ashore on an enchanted isle, basking in an eternal afternoon, the desire was born within them, to the soothing sounds of melodious cascades, never again to return to their homes, their women, their children, and never again to be tossed about by the waves of the open sea.

In this house there were strange faces of men and of women, faces distinguished by a fatal beauty that I seemed to have seen before, in ages and in countries that I could not precisely recall, and which inspired in me a brotherly sympathy rather than that fear which is usually aroused at the appearance of a stranger. If I should try to describe in some way or other the singular expression of their glances, I would say that never had I seen eyes gleam more brightly with the horror of boredom and the immortal desire to be alive.

As for my host and myself, when we sat down we were already old and perfect friends. We ate, and we drank deeply of all sorts of extraordinary wines, and—what is no less extraordinary—it seemed to me, after several hours, that I was no more intoxicated than he.

However, gambling, that superhuman pleasure, interrupted our copious libations at various intervals, and I ought to say that while playing a rubber, I staked and lost my soul with heroic light-heartedness and indifference. The soul is so intangible a thing, often so useless and sometimes so troublesome, that I was hardly more disturbed at

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this loss than if I had dropped my visiting-card in the street.

We spent long hours smoking cigars, and their incomparable savour and perfume filled my soul with longing for unknown delights and places yet unseen, and, intoxicated by all this bliss, in an access of familiarity which did not seem to displease him, I dared to exclaim, as I lifted a glass filled to the brim: "To your immortal health, Old Goat!"

We talked of the universe, of its creation and of its future destruction, of the great idea of the century—namely, of Progress and Perfectibility—and, in general, of all kinds of human infatuations. On this subject his Highness had an inexhaustible number of irrefutable jests, and he expressed himself with a suavity of diction and a quietly comic humour such as I have never found in any of the most famous conversationalists in the world. He explained to me the absurdity of the different philosophies that have thus far possessed men's minds, and deigned even to talk to me in confidence of certain fundamental principles, which I am not at liberty to share with anyone.

He complained in no way of the evil reputation which he enjoyed the world over; he assured me that he himself was the one most interested in the destruction of *superstition*; and he confessed to me that, as concerns his own power, he had only once known fear, and that was on the day he had heard a preacher, more subtle than his colleagues, cry from the pulpit: "My dear brethren, when you hear the progress of knowledge praised, do not ever forget that the Devil's cleverest trick is to persuade you that he does not exist!"

The memory of this famous orator brought us naturally to the subject of Academies; and my strange host declared to me that at times, he was not averse to inspiring the pens, the words and the consciences of pedagogues and that, although invisible he was almost always present in person at academic meetings.

Encouraged by so much kindness, I asked him if he had



any news of God, and if he had seen him recently. There was a note of sadness in his voice as he replied, with great unconcern: "We bow to each other when we meet, but like two old noblemen whose innate good breeding cannot quite efface the memory of an old grudge."

It is doubtful whether his Highness had ever given so long an audience to a simple mortal, and I feared to be presumptuous.

Finally, as the trembling dawn whitened the windows, this famous personage, sung by so many poets, and served by so many philosophers who unwittingly work for his glory, said to me: "I want you to remember me agreeably, and I want to prove to you that I—of whom so much ill is spoken—am sometimes a *good devil*, to use one of your vulgar expressions. In order to make up for the irretrievable loss of your soul, I shall give you the stake you would have won if fate had been with you—namely, the ability to solace and conquer, during your life-time, that strange propensity for Boredom, which is the source of all your maladies and of all your miseries. Never shall you express a desire that I will not help you to realize; flattery and even adoration will be yours; you will lord it over your vulgar equals; money and gold and diamonds and fairy palaces will seek you out and will beg you to accept them, without your having to make the least effort to obtain them; you will change your home and fatherland as often as your fancy may dictate; you will be drunk with pleasure, without ever growing weary, in charming, sunny lands, where the women are as fragrant as the flowers. . . ." Thereupon he stood up and bid me goodbye with a charming smile.

Had it not been for the fear of humiliating myself before so great an assembly, I would have fallen willingly at the feet of this generous gambler, to thank him for his extraordinary munificence. But after I had left him, an incurable mistrust gradually took possession of me; I dared no longer believe in such prodigious happiness; and as I went to bed,

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mumbling the prayer which idiotic habit still brought to my lips, I drowsily repeated: "My God, oh Lord, my God! Make the Devil keep his word with me!"

### XXX

#### THE CORD

*To Edouard Manet*

"ILLUSIONS," MY friend said to me, "are perhaps as innumerable as the relations of men between themselves, or of men with things. When the illusion disappears, that is to say when we see the being or the fact just as it is outside ourselves, we experience a curious sentiment, composed partly of regret at the disappearance of that phantom, and partly of agreeable surprise at the novel sight of the real fact. If there exists a phenomenon that is unchanging, trite, obvious, and of such a nature as to make deception about it impossible, it is maternal love. It is as difficult to imagine a mother without maternal love as a light without heat; therefore is it not perfectly proper to attribute to maternal love all a mother's actions and words relative to her child? And yet, listen to this little story of how I was singularly mystified by this most natural of illusions.

"My profession as a painter leads me to observe very attentively the faces, the physiognomies, that I see wherever I go. You know what pleasure we derive from that particular faculty which makes life keener in our eyes and more significant than to other men. In the remote quarter where I live, and where vast grass-grown spaces still separate the houses, I frequently observed a child whose exceptionally bright, clever face fascinated me. He often sat for me, and I would change him into a little gypsy, or into an angel, or sometimes into a mythological Cupid. I painted him holding the violin of the vagabond, the Crown of Thorns and the

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nails of the Passion, and the Torch of Eros. I was so taken with the boy's humours that one day I asked his parents, who were poor people, to let me have him, promising to dress him well, to supply him with a little money and to give him no other work than that of cleaning my brushes and running my errands. This child, kept properly clean, was charming, and the life that he led with me seemed to him a paradise, compared with what he had endured in his own poverty-stricken home. But I ought to say that the little fellow often astonished me by his strange and precocious fits of sadness, and that he very soon manifested an immoderate fondness for sugar and liqueurs; so much so that one day, when I ascertained that in spite of my repeated admonitions, he had committed another theft of this nature, I threatened to send him back to his parents. Then I went out, and my business kept me away from home quite a while.

"Imagine my horror and my astonishment when, upon my return, the first thing I saw as I entered the house was the boy, my playful little companion, hanging from the top of that cupboard! His feet almost touched the floor; a chair, which he must have kicked away with his feet, was overturned beside him; his head was twisted convulsively over one shoulder; his swollen face, and his eyes, staring with a fearful fixity, made me think for a moment that he was still alive. To cut him down was not as easy as you might imagine. He was already quite stiff, and I was singularly loath to let him drop to the floor. I had to hold him up with one arm, and cut the cord with my free hand. That done, I was still not through. The little monster had used a very thin cord which had cut deeply into the flesh, and with a small pair of scissors I now had to pry into the swollen wound and find the cord, so as to free his neck.

"I forgot to tell you that I had called loudly for help, and that all my neighbours had refused to come to my assistance; they were restrained by that deep-rooted prejudice, held by civilized people, for some reason or other never to have any-

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thing to do with a hanged man. Finally a doctor came, who declared that the child had been dead for several hours. When, later on, we had to undress him for the burial, the corpse was so stiff that we had to give up trying to bend his limbs, and tore and cut his clothes in order to get them off.

"The police superintendent, to whom naturally I had to report the accident, looked at me suspiciously, and said: 'This is a shady affair!' prompted, I suppose, by an inveterate professional desire to terrify, whatever the facts, the innocent as well as the guilty.

"There remained a supreme duty to perform, the mere thought of which caused me terrible anguish: the parents had to be informed. My feet literally refused to take me to them. Finally, courage came to me. But, to my great astonishment, the mother was unmoved; not a tear trickled from the corner of her eye. I attributed this strange behavior to the horror she must be feeling, and I remembered the well-known aphorism: 'The most terrible sorrows are those that are silent.' As for the father, he simply said, with a stupid, sleepy air: 'After all, it is probably just as well; he was sure to come to a bad end!'

"The corpse was laid out on my divan, and, assisted by a servant girl, I was busy with the final preparations when the mother entered my studio. She wanted, she said, to see her son's corpse. I could not, of course, prevent her from dwelling upon her misfortune; I could not refuse her this supreme and sombre consolation. At last she asked me to show her the place where her son had hanged himself. 'Oh, no, Madame,' I answered her, 'that will distress you.' And as my eyes involuntarily sought the ghastly cupboard, I perceived with disgust and horror and anger that the nail was still fixed in the partition, with a long piece of cord still hanging from it. I rushed over to tear off those last vestiges of the tragedy, and I was on the point of throwing them out of the open window, when the poor woman seized my arm and said in a tone of voice I could not resist: 'Oh, sir! Let

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me have them! Please let me have them!' I felt certain that despair had so upset her mind that she was seized now with tenderness for that which had been the cause of her son's death, and wanted to keep it as a horrible and precious relic—so she took possession of the nail and string.

"Everything was over at last. I had only to get back to work, perhaps a little more feverishly, than usual, in order to shut out the haunting memory of that little corpse whose ghost, with its big, staring eyes, harried me. But the next day I received a packet of letters; some from my fellow-lodgers, others from my neighbours; one from the first floor; another from the second; still another from the third, and so on; some in a jesting style, as though trying to hide the sincerity of their demand; under an apparent lightness of tone others, clumsily shameless and ill-spelt; but all with the same object in view, namely, to obtain from me a piece of the fatal and beatific cord. Of those who signed them, the greater part, I must admit, were women and not men; but all, you may believe me, were not of the common or lowest class. I have kept these letters.

"And then, suddenly, it came to me in a flash, and I understood why the mother was so eager to have that piece of string, and how she planned to console herself.

## XXXI

### VOCATIONS √

IN A lovely garden, where the rays of an autumnal sun seemed to be pleasantly lingering, under a green sky in which aureate clouds floated like travelling continents, four handsome children, four boys, no doubt tired of their games, began to talk.

One said: "Yesterday I was taken to the theatre. In great, gloomy palaces, beyond which could be seen the sky



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and the sea, men and women, looking grave and sad, but far more beautiful and far better dressed than those we see elsewhere, spoke in melodious voices. They threatened each other, they pleaded, they grieved, and often they gripped the dagger that was thrust through their girdles. Ah! that was splendid! The women were more beautiful and much taller than those who come to our house, and though their big, sunken eyes and their fiery cheeks gave them a terrifying appearance, you could not help loving them. They frightened you, they made you want to weep, and yet you were glad. And then, what is still more strange, they made you want to dress just as they were dressed, say and do the same things, and speak in the same voice."

One of these four children, who for some seconds had ceased listening to his friend, and was staring strangely at some point in the sky, said suddenly: "Look, look over there. Do you see *him*? He's sitting on that lonely little cloud, that little fire-coloured cloud, that is drifting slowly. *He*, too, seems to be looking at us."

"But who?" asked the others.

"God!" he replied in a tone of perfect conviction. "Ah! He's already far off; in a moment you will not be able to see him at all. He must be travelling, to visit all the countries. There, he's going to pass behind that row of trees that is almost on the horizon . . . and now he is going down behind the belfry. Ah! He's gone!" The child remained a long while looking in that direction, and while he gazed at the line that separates the earth from the sky, his eyes reflected his inarticulate ecstasy and regret.

"Isn't he stupid, talking about that God of his, whom he alone can see?" said the third, a tiny fellow, yet full of surprising vivacity and vitality. "I'll tell you something that happened to me and which never happened to you, something more interesting than your theatre or your clouds. A few days ago, my parents took me with them on a journey, and, as there were not enough beds for all of us in the inn

where we stayed, it was decided that I was to sleep in my nurse's bed." He made his friends come closer, and continued in a lower voice. "It's a funny feeling, let me tell you, not to be sleeping alone and to be in a bed with your nurse, in the dark. I couldn't sleep, so while she slept I amused myself by running my hand over her arms, and her neck and her shoulders. Her neck and arms are bigger than those of other women, and her skin is so soft, so soft—just like notepaper or tissue paper. I found this such fun that I would have kept it up if I had not been afraid, first of waking her, and then of I don't know what. So I buried my head in her hair which hung down her back, heavy as a horse's mane, and, let me tell you, it smelled just as wonderfully as the flowers in the garden at this minute. Try it, sometime, if you get the chance, and you'll see."

The young author of this wonderful revelation, while telling his story, had his eyes wide open, as if still astonished at what he had experienced, and the rays of the setting sun, as they touched the red curls of his dishevelled hair, changed them, as it were, into a sulphurous halo of passion. It was easy to predict that this lad would not waste his life seeking Divinity in the clouds; rather would he often find it elsewhere.

Finally the fourth said: "You know I never have a good time at home; they never take me to the theatre; my tutor is too stingy; God never concerns himself about me and my boredom; and I haven't even a fine-looking nurse to pamper me. It has often seemed to me that my greatest delight would be always to keep going straight ahead, without knowing where, without anyone bothering about it, and of always seeing new countries. I am never happy anywhere, and I always think I should be happier elsewhere than there where I happen to be. Well, at a recent fair held in a neighbouring village, I saw three men who live exactly as I should like to live. You fellows didn't notice them. They were tall, almost black, and very proud, though they were in rags, and they looked as if they needed help from no one. Their

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great dark eyes became absolutely brilliant when they played their music; such astonishing music that it made me want to dance, weep, or do both at once, and it would have driven me mad if I had heard much more of it. One, as he drew his bow across his violin, seemed to tell his sorrows, and the other, making his tiny hammer skip over the notes of a little piano that hung from his neck by a leather strap, seemed to be making fun of his comrade's lamentation, while the third clashed his cymbals from time to time with extraordinary violence. They were so pleased with themselves that they kept on playing their wild music, even after the crowd had dispersed. Finally, they picked up the coins that had been tossed to them, loaded their baggage on their backs, and went their way. I wanted to find out where they lived, so I followed them at a distance, until they reached the edge of the forest, and then it suddenly came to me that they lived nowhere.

"Then one of them said: 'Shall we put up our tent?'

"'Lord, no,' said the other, 'it's such a wonderful night!'

"The third said, as he counted the collection: 'These people here have no sense of music, and their women dance like bears. Fortunately, in less than one month, we shall be in Austria, where we shall find pleasanter people.'

"'Perhaps it would be better to start for Spain; the season is getting on. We ought to get away before the rains, and wet nothing but our throats,' said one of the two others.

"As you see, I have remembered everything. Then each one drank a mug of brandy and fell asleep, his face turned towards the stars. At first I wanted to ask them to take me with them and to teach me how to play their instruments; but I did not dare, probably because it's always very difficult to make any kind of a decision, and also because I was afraid of being overtaken before I was outside of France."

The uninterested attitude of the three other boys gave me food for reflection. They already considered the little fellow *queer*. I looked at him closely. There was something

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in his eyes and in his forehead which betokened that fatal precocity which generally alienates sympathy, and which, I don't know why, excited mine to such a pitch that for a moment I had the strange idea that I might find a brother who was unknown to me.

The sun had set. The solemn night came into its own. The children parted, each one going, unconsciously, according to chance or circumstance, to consummate his destiny, to scandalise his kindred and to gravitate either towards glory or towards dishonour.

### XXXII

#### THE THYRSUS

*To Franz Liszt*

WHAT is a Thyrsus? According to the moral or poetical meaning, it is a sacerdotal emblem in the hand of priests or of priestesses, celebrating the divinity whose interpreters and servants they are. But physically, it is only a stick, a mere stick, a hop pole, a vine prop, dry, hard and straight. Around this stick, in capricious twists and twirls, stalks and flowers frolic and play, some sinuous and free, others drooping like bells or like overturned cups. An astonishing glory radiates from this confusion of lines and of soft, brilliant colours. Is it not as though the curve and the spiral were paying court to the straight line, and dancing about it in silent adoration? And all these delicate corollas, all these calyxes, these perfumes and colours, are they not executing a mystic fandango around the hieratical stick? And yet, where is the imprudent mortal who would dare to decide whether the flowers and the vine branches were made for the stick, or whether the stick was not a mere pretext for displaying the beauty of the vine branches and the flowers? The Thyrsus is an illustration of your astonishing duality,

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mighty and venerated master, dear Bacchant of mysterious and passionate Beauty. Never did wood nymph, exasperated by the invincible Bacchus, shake her Thyrsus over the heads of her distracted companions with more energy and more caprice, than you wave your genius over the hearts of your brothers. The stick represents your will, straight, constant and unshakable; the flowers, the wandering of your fantasy around your will; it is the feminine element executing alluring pirouettes around the male. Straight line and arabesque, intention and expression, inflexibility of the will, flexibility of the word, unity of the end, variety of the means, all-powerful and indivisible amalgam of genius, what analyst would have the odious courage to divide and to separate you?

Dear Liszt, through the mists, beyond the rivers, above the cities where the pianos sing your glory, where the printing-press translates your wisdom, wherever you may be, in the splendours of the Eternal City or in the mists of those dreamy lands consoled by Cambrinus, improvising songs of delight or of ineffable sorrow, or confiding to paper your abstruse meditations, singer of eternal Pleasure and of eternal Anguish, philosopher, poet and artist, I salute you in immortality!

### XXXIII

#### *BE DRUNKEN*

BE DRUNKEN, always. That is the point; nothing else matters. If you would not feel the horrible burden of Time weigh you down and crush you to the earth, be drunken continually.

Drunken with what? With wine, with poetry or with virtue, as you please. But be drunken.

And if sometimes, on the steps of a palace, or on the green grass in a ditch, or in the dreary solitude of your own room,



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you should awaken and find the drunkenness half or entirely gone, ask of the wind, of the wave, of the star, of the bird, of the clock, of all that flies, of all that sighs, of all that moves, of all that sings, of all that speaks, ask what hour it is; and wind, wave, star, bird, or clock will answer you: "It is the hour to be drunken! Be drunken, if you would not be the martyred slaves of Time; be drunken continually! With wine, with poetry or with virtue, as you please."

### XXXIV

#### *ALREADY!*

A HUNDRED times already the sun had sprung up, radiant or sad, out of the immense vat of the sea whose rim was only vaguely discernible; a hundred times it had plunged anew, now glittering or sullen, into its immense bath of night. For days and days we contemplated the other side of the firmament, and deciphered the celestial alphabet of the antipodes. All the passengers groaned and complained. You would have said that the approach to land intensified their suffering. They said, "When shall we have done with a sleep disturbed by the waves and troubled by a wind that snores louder than we? When shall we be able to digest in an arm-chair that stays in place?"

Some of them thought of their homes, and were lonesome for their sulky, unfaithful wives, and their shrill progeny. All were so taken with the picture of the invisible land that they might, I believe, have eaten grass with more appetite than the beasts.

Finally, a coast was sighted; and as we came nearer, we saw that it was a magnificent, a lovely land. It seemed as if the music of life came from it in a vague murmur, and that from its shores, rich in verdure, a delicious fragrance of flowers and fruits was wafted for miles. Immediately, every-

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one was happy; bad tempers were forgotten. All quarrels were abandoned, all mutual wrongs forgiven; duels which had been arranged were erased from the memory, and rancour blew away like smoke.

I alone was sad, inconceivably sad. Like a priest bereft of his Deity, I could not, without deep distress, tear myself away from this monstrously seductive sea, this sea so infinitely varied in its fearful simplicity, and which seemed to contain within itself, and to portray by its high spirits, its appearance, its anger and its smiles, the moods, sufferings and ecstasies of all the souls who had lived, who are living and who shall live!

In saying farewell to this incomparable beauty, I was profoundly dejected; and that is why, when each one of my companions said: "At last!" I could only cry: "*Already!*"

And yet this was the earth, the earth with all its sounds, its passions, its comforts, its feasts; it was a rich and magnificent earth, full of promise, which sent out to us a mysterious perfume of rose and of musk, and from whose shores the music of life came to us in an amorous murmur.

### XXXV

#### WINDOWS

HE WHO looks in through an open window never sees as much as he who looks at a window that is shut. There is nothing more profound, more mysterious, more fertile, more sinister, or more dazzling, than a window, lighted by a candle. What we can see in the sunlight is always less interesting than what transpires behind the panes of a window. In that dark or luminous hole, life lives, life dreams, life suffers.

Across the waves of roofs, I see a woman of mature years, wrinkled, and poor, who is always bending over something,

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and who never goes out. From her face, from her dress, from her gestures, out of almost nothing, I have made up the woman's story, or rather her legend, and sometimes I say it over to myself, and weep.

If it had been a poor old man, I could have made up his just as easily.

And I go to bed, proud of having lived and suffered in others.

Perhaps you will say to me: "Are you sure that it is the true story?" What does it matter, what does any reality outside of myself matter, if it has helped me to live, to feel that I am, and what I am?

### XXXVI

#### *THE DESIRE TO PAINT*

UNHAPPY PERHAPS the man, but happy the artist who is torn by desire!

I burn to paint her who came to me so rarely and who fled so rapidly, like some beautiful thing reluctantly left behind by a traveller when he vanishes into the night. How long it is since she disappeared. She is beautiful, and more than beautiful; she is astounding. In her, all is dusk, and all that she inspires is nocturnal and profound. Her eyes are two caverns where mystery vaguely gleams, and her glance illuminates like lightning; it is a flash in the darkness. I would compare her to a black sun, if one could conceive of a black star radiating light and happiness. But she makes me think rather of the moon, which must have marked her with its baleful influence; not the white moon of idylls, which is like a cold bride, but the sinister and intoxicating moon, suspended in the depths of a stormy night tormented by racing clouds; not the peaceable and discreet moon visiting the slumber of innocent men, but the moon torn from the

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sky, vanquished and rebellious, that the Thessalian Sorceresses cruelly compelled to dance on the terrified grass!

Behind her little forehead lie a tenacious will and a predatory instinct. Yet, in the lower half of that disturbing face, where quivering nostrils inhale the unknown and the impossible, laughter bursts with an inexpressible grace from a wide mouth, red and white and beautiful, that brings to mind the miracle of a superb flower blossoming in volcanic soil. There are women who arouse the hunger to master and possess them; but this one inspires in me the desire to die slowly beneath her gaze.

### XXXVII

#### *THE FAVOURS OF THE MOON*

THE MOON, who is caprice itself, looked in through the window while you lay asleep in your cradle, and said to herself: "This child pleases me."

And she came softly down her staircase of clouds, and passed noiselessly through the window-pane. Then she leaned over you with a mother's supple tenderness, and she painted her colours upon your face. That is why your eyes are green and your cheeks extraordinarily pale. It was from looking at this visitor, that your eyes became so strangely wide; and she clasped her arms so tenderly about your bosom that ever since you have been close to tears.

Then, in the flood of her joy, the Moon filled the room with a phosphorescent atmosphere, like a luminous poison; and all this living light thought and said: "My kiss shall be upon you for ever. You shall be beautiful as I am beautiful. You shall love that which I love and which loves me: water and clouds, night and silence; the vast, green sea; the formless and multiform water; the place where you shall never be; the lover whom you shall never know; unnatural

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flowers; perfumes which madden; cats that swoon on top of pianos and whimper like women, in hoarse, sweet voices!

"And you shall be loved by my lovers, courted by my courtiers. You shall be the queen of green-eyed men whose breasts I have also clasped in my nocturnal caresses; of those who love the sea, the vast tumultuous green sea, the formless and multiform water, the place where they are not, the woman whom they do not know, the sinister flowers that look like the censers of some unknown religion, the perfumes that disturb the will, and the wild and voluptuous beasts that are the emblems of their folly."

And that is why, dear accursed spoilt child, I lie now at your feet, seeking to find in you the image of the fearful goddess, the prophetic godmother, the corruptive nurse of all the moonstruck of the world.

### XXXVIII

#### *WHICH IS TRUE?*

I KNEW a certain Benedicta who filled earth and air with ideals; and from whose eyes men learnt the desire for greatness, beauty, glory, and for everything that strengthened their belief in immortality.

But this miraculous child was too beautiful to live long. She died only a few days after I had come to know her, and I buried her with my own hands, one day when Spring wafted the contents of its censer even as far as the graveyard. I buried her with my own hands, well sealed in a coffin of wood, perfumed and incorruptible as an Indian casket.

And as I stood gazing at the place where I had hidden my treasure, all at once I saw a little person singularly like the deceased. She was trampling on the fresh soil with strange, hysterical violence, and was laughing and shouting: "I am the real Benedicta! and a vile slut I am, too! And to punish



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### XLII

#### *PORTRAITS OF MISTRESSES*

IN A man's boudoir, that is to say in the smoking-room of a fashionable house of ill-fame, four men sat smoking and drinking. They were neither young nor old, ugly nor handsome; but, old or young, they bore the unmistakable mark of veterans of joy, an indescribable something, a cold, jesting sadness which clearly said: "We have lived intensely, and we are seeking that which we could love and esteem."

One of them turned the conversation to the subject of women. It would have been more philosophical not to have mentioned it at all; but there are intelligent men who, after a certain amount of drinking, are not averse to banal conversations. Then, one listens to whomever is speaking, just as one might listen to dance music.

"All men," said this one, "were once the age of Cherubin: that period of life when, for want of wood-nymphs, we embrace oak trees, and without disgust. That's the first stage of love; in the second stage, we begin to choose. To be able to deliberate is already a sign of decadence. It is then, really, that we seek beauty. As for me, gentlemen, I am proud to say that quite some time ago I reached the climacteric period of the third stage, when beauty itself will no longer suffice unless it is spiced with perfumes, silks, etc. I must confess that I sometimes aspire, as to some unknown happiness, to a fourth stage wherein I should attain absolute tranquillity. But all my life, except at the Cherubin age, I have been unusually sensitive to the annoying stupidity, the irritating mediocrity of women. What I love most in animals is their candour. Imagine, then, how my last mistress must have made me suffer!

"She was the illegitimate daughter of a Prince. Beautiful, of course; otherwise I should not have chosen her. But she

spoil everything by an ambition that was both ugly and unseemly. She was the kind of woman who always wants to play a man's part. 'You are not a man! Ah! If only I were a man! I am more of a man than you are!' This was the unbearable refrain uttered by those lips that should have released nothing but songs. Whenever I spoke admiringly of a book, a poem, or an opera, she would say immediately: 'Perhaps you think that is very fine; but how do you know what is good?' And then she would argue.

"One fine day she began to study chemistry; and thereafter, between her mouth and mine, there was always a glass mask. And besides all this, she was a prude. If I happened to make love to her too ardently, she would writhe like an irritated sensitive plant."

"How did it all end?" asked one of the three others. "I didn't know you were so patient."

"God saw to it," said he, "that the remedy lay in the evil itself. One day I found this Minerva, so eager for ideal power, closeted with my man servant. The circumstances were such that I had to retire discreetly, to avoid causing them embarrassment. That very night I dismissed them both, after paying all arrears."

"For my part," resumed the man who had interrupted him, "I have only myself to complain of. Happiness came to live with me and I did not recognize it. Destiny allotted to me, not long ago, the enjoyment of a woman who was certainly the sweetest, the most submissive and the most devoted of creatures;—always at my service, and always without enthusiasm. 'Of course I will, since you wish it' was her inevitable reply. If you were to strike this wall or this sofa, you would draw more sighs than the most passionate ardour drew from the breast of my mistress. After we had lived together for a year she confessed to me that she had never known pleasure. I became disgusted with this unequal duel, and the incomparable girl married somebody or other. Later, it occurred to me to go and see her. As she showed

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me her six handsome children she said: 'Well, my dear friend, the wife is still the virgin she was as your mistress.' Nothing about her was changed. Sometimes I miss her: I should have married her."

The others began to laugh, and a third one said:

"Gentlemen, I have known certain pleasures that you may have neglected. I refer to the comedy in love, the comedy which does not preclude admiration. I admired my last mistress more than you could have, I believe, hated or loved yours. And everybody admired her as much as I did. When we went into a restaurant, everyone would soon stop eating in order to stare at her. Even the waiters and the woman behind the counter would respond to that contagious rapture, to the point of forgetting their duties. In short, I lived for a time with a *living phenomenon*. She ate, chewed, crunched, devoured, swallowed, in the lightest, the most casual manner. For a long time she kept me thus entranced. She had a sweet, dreamy, romantically English way of saying: 'I'm hungry!' She would show her beautiful teeth and repeat those words night and day, in a way that would have both moved and amused you. I might have made a fortune showing her at country fairs as a *polyphagous monster*. I fed her well; yet she left me."

"For a provision merchant, no doubt?"

"Something similar, some sort of official in the commissariat department who, by a form of graft known only to himself, probably manages to supply the poor child with the rations of several soldiers. At least that is what I suppose."

"I," said the fourth, "have suffered terribly, and for just the contrary of that for which feminine selfishness is generally blamed. You, too fortunate mortals, are wrong to complain of the imperfections of your mistresses!"

This was said in a very serious manner, by a man of kindly and sober mien. He had a clerical face, unfortunately brightened by clear grey eyes, by eyes whose glance said: "I will!" or "you must!" or "I never forgive!"

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"If you, G——, nervous as I know you to be, and you, K—— and J——, cowardly and frivolous as you are, had been living with a certain woman I knew, you would either have fled or have died. I, as you see, survived. Imagine a woman incapable of committing an error of sentiment or of calculation; imagine an unbearable serenity of character; a devotion without sham and without stress; a kindness without weakness; an energy without violence. The story of my love-affair is like an interminable voyage, vertiginously monotonous, across a surface as pure and polished as a mirror, which might have reflected all my sentiments and my gestures with the ironical accuracy of my own conscience, and in such a fashion that I could not allow myself to make a gesture or to utter an unreasonable sentiment without instantly perceiving the silent reproach of my inseparable spectre. Love appeared to me like a guardian. What follies she kept me from, that I regret never having committed! How many debts paid in spite of myself! She deprived me of all the benefits I might have derived from my personal folly. With a cold, insurmountable rule, she thwarted all my caprices. To make it more unbearable, she never demanded gratitude, once the danger was past. How many times I curbed my desire to seize her by the throat and cry: 'Be imperfect, you wretched woman, so that I can love you without discomfort and without anger!' For several years I admired her, my heart full of hatred. . . . Well, it was not I who finally died!"

"Ah!" said the others, "then she's dead?"

"Yes! It couldn't possibly go on any longer. Love had become for me an insufferable nightmare. Victory or death, as they say in Politics; these were the alternatives forced upon me by destiny! One night, in a wood, near a pond, after a melancholy stroll during which her eyes reflected the peacefulness of the sky, and my heart was shrivelled like Hell. . . ."

"What?"

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"How?"

"What do you mean?"

"It was inevitable. I have too strong a sense of justice to beat, outrage or dismiss an irreproachable servant. But I had to reconcile this sentiment with the horror this person inspired in me; I had to get rid of this being without wanting in my respect for her. What else could I have done with her, *since she was perfect?*"

The three others gazed at him with a vague and rather blank look, as though pretending not to understand, and as though tacitly confessing that they did not feel themselves capable of such extreme measures, even though they happened to be sufficiently justified.

Then they sent for more wine, to kill time, whose life is so hardy, and to accelerate life, which flows so slowly.

### XLIII

#### THE COURTEOUS MARKSMAN

As THE carriage drove through the wood, he told the driver to stop near a shooting gallery, remarking that he would like to take a shot or two, to *kill* Time. To kill that monster: isn't that everyone's most usual and legitimate occupation? Gallantly he offered his arm to his dear, charming and execrable wife, to that mysterious woman to whom he owed so many pleasures, so many sorrows, and perhaps the greater part of his genius.

Several shots missed their mark; one even lodged in the ceiling; and as the charming creature laughed immoderately, making fun of her husband's skill, he suddenly turned, and said to her: "See that doll, there, on the right, with its nose in the air and the haughty expression. Well, dear angel, I am pretending *that it is you!*" And closing his eyes, he let go the trigger. The doll was neatly decapitated.



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Then bowing to his dear, charming, execrable wife, his inevitable and pitiless Muse, he respectfully kissed her hand, and added: "Ah! my dear angel, how I do thank you for my skill!"

### XLIV

#### *THE SOUP AND THE CLOUDS*

MY DEAR little madcap friend had invited me to dine with her. Through the open window of the dining-room I watched that ever-changing architecture God fashions out of vapour, those marvellous structures built of the impalpable; and I said to myself, as I watched: "All those dissolving shapes are almost as lovely as the eyes of my beloved, my fantastic little madcap with the green eyes."

And suddenly I received a violent blow from behind, and I heard a hoarse, charming voice, a voice hysterical and as though made raucous by too much brandy, the voice of my dear little beloved that said: "Are you ever going to take your soup, you damned silly old cloud-merchant?"

### XLV

#### *THE SHOOTING GALLERY AND THE CEMETERY*

AT THE Sign of the Cemetery. Tavern. "Curious sign-board," our wanderer said to himself, "but certainly one to inspire thirst! I'm sure the proprietor of this tavern knows his Horace and those Poets who were pupils of Epicurus. He may even know about the profound sensibilities of the ancient Egyptians, to whom no feast was complete without a skeleton, or without some emblem of the brevity of life."

He entered, drank a glass of beer while facing the graves,

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and slowly smoked a cigar. Then it occurred to him to explore the cemetery, where the grass was so high and so inviting, and where so ardent a sun held sway.

For indeed, both light and heat raged there: one would have said that the intoxicated sun was sprawled full length on a magnificent carpet of flowers battered on destruction. The air was filled with an immense buzzing of life—the life of the infinitely minute—interrupted at regular intervals by the crackling of shots from a shooting gallery near by, that burst like champagne corks amid the hum of some mute symphony.

Then, basking in the sun that heated his brain and breathing the atmosphere pregnant with the warm perfumes of Death, he heard a voice whispering from the tomb on which he was seated, and this voice said: "Accursed be your targets and your rifles, turbulent mortals, who care so little for the dead and their divine repose! Accursed be your ambitions, and accursed your designs, impatient mortals, who come to study the art of killing near the sanctuary of Death! If you only knew how easy it is to win the prize, how easy it is to hit the mark, and how little anything matters, excepting Death, you would not tire yourselves so, industrious mortals, and you would prove far less troublesome to the slumber of those who long ago attained the Goal, the only real goal of odious life!"

### XLVI

#### *LOSS OF HALO*

"WHAT! You here, my dear fellow? You, in a house of ill-fame! You, the drinker of quintessences! You, the eater of ambrosia! This is certainly a surprise!"

"My dear fellow, you know my fear of horses and of carriages. Well, just now, as I was hurrying across the boule-

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vard, hopping about in the mud in order to get through that moving chaos out of which death comes galloping at you from all sides at once, I made a sudden movement, and my halo slipped from my head into the slime of the road. I hadn't the courage to pick it up; I decided that it was pleasanter to lose my insignia than to have my bones broken. And then I said to myself, it's an ill wind that blows no good. For now I can wander about incognito, commit base actions, give myself up to debauchery, like any simple mortal. So here I am, just like yourself, you see!"

"At least you ought to advertise for the halo, or notify the police about it."

"Certainly not! I'm very happy here. You alone have recognized me. Besides, dignity bores me. And I like to think that some miserable poet will pick it up, and shamelessly wear it. How nice to be able to make someone happy—someone I can laugh at! Think of X. or of Z! How funny that would be!"

## XLVII

### MADemoiselle LANCET

I HAD reached the outskirts of the suburb, when, in the light of the gas-lamps, I felt an arm gently seize mine, and heard a voice say in my ear: "Are you a doctor, sir?"

I looked at her; she was a tall, robust girl, with wide-open eyes, a face lightly rouged, and hair waving in the wind with the strings of her bonnet.

"No! I am not a doctor. Let me go."

"O yes! You are a doctor. I can see that. Come home with me. You'll be pleased with me, I can promise you!"

"Certainly I'll come to see you, but not right away. *After the doctor*, you know."

"Ah," said she, still clinging to my arm and bursting

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into laughter, "you must have your little joke, doctor! I have known many like you. Come!"

I am passionately fond of mystery, because I always hope to be able to unravel it. So I allowed myself to be persuaded by my companion, or rather by this unexpected enigma.

I omit the description of that hovel; one may find it in the pages of many famous old French poets. Only I was struck by one detail Régnier never observed: on the walls there were two or three portraits of celebrated doctors.

How she pampered me! A blazing fire, warm wine, cigars; and as she offered me these good things and lighted a cigar herself, the facetious creature said to me: "Make yourself at home, my dear. This should remind you of your youth and of the good old days at the hospital. But how is it that your hair has turned white? You didn't look like that when you were an interne at L——, a short while ago. I remember that it was you who used to help him with the major operations. There was a man who loved to cut and incise and amputate! It was you who used to hand him the instruments, the threads and the sponges. And when the operation was over, how he would take out his watch and say proudly: 'Five minutes, gentlemen!' Yes, I go everywhere. I know these Gentlemen well."

A few moments later she returned to the old refrain. "You are a doctor, aren't you, dearie?" she repeated, using the familiar form of address.

This absurd insistence made me leap to my feet. "No!" I cried furiously.

"A surgeon, then."

"No! No! Unless it were to cut off your head!" And I cursed her roundly.

"Wait," said she, "you'll see."

She took a packet of papers from the cupboard. They were simply a collection of portraits of the famous doctors of that period, lithographed by Maurin, that for

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years I had seen offered for sale on the Quai Voltaire.

"Look! Do you recognize this one?"

"Yes! That's X——; besides, his name's at the bottom. I know him personally."

"I knew you did! Look! Here's Z——, who used to say to his class, when speaking of X——: 'That monster whose face betrays the blackness of his soul!' Just because the other wasn't of his opinion about a certain case! How they used to roar with laughter about that, at the medical school, in those days! Don't you remember? Look! Here's K——, who denounced the insurgents he was treating in his hospital. That was the year of the insurrections. Is it conceivable that such a handsome man should have so little heart? And now here's W——, a famous English doctor. I caught him when he came to Paris. Hasn't he an effeminate appearance?"

As I touched a sealed packet lying on the little table, she said: "Wait a bit; those are the internes, and these, in this packet, are the externes."

And she spread out, fan-wise, a stack of photographs of much younger men.

"When we meet again, you'll give me your picture, won't you, dear?"

"But," said I, giving way in turn to my own obsession, "what makes you think I'm a doctor?"

"Because you are so nice and so good to women."

"Queer logic!" I said to myself.

"Oh, I never make a mistake; I have known a great many. I love doctors so much that, without being ill, I go to see them sometimes, only just to look at them. There are some who say to me coldly: 'You are not ill in the least!' But there are others who understand me, because I smile at them."

"And when they don't understand you?"

"Oh then, as I have needlessly disturbed them, I leave ten



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francs on the mantelpiece.—Those men are so good and so kind!—I discovered in La Pitié a young interne as pretty as an angel, and so polite! And who works, poor fellow! His friends tell me he hasn't a penny, because his parents are too poor to send him any money. That gave me courage. After all, I'm still good-looking, although not very young; so I said to him: 'Come and see me, come and see me often. And don't be bashful; I don't need any money.' I made him understand what I meant; I didn't say it right out; I was so afraid of humiliating him, poor child. And do you know, I have a strange desire that I don't dare mention to him? I want him to come and see me with his case of surgical instruments and his apron, even with a little blood on it!"

She said this very simply, as a man might say to an actress he loved: "I want to see you dressed in the costume you wore when you created that famous part."

Still obstinate, I went on: "Can you remember the exact time and the exact occasion when this singular passion first possessed you?"

I found it hard to make myself understood; finally I succeeded. There was an expression of sadness in her face and, as well as I can remember, she turned her eyes away as she replied: "I don't know—I don't remember."

What strange sights one sees in an immense city, when one knows how to wander and observe! Life swarms with innocent monsters. Oh Lord, my God! You, the Creator; you, the Master; you who have made Law and Liberty; you, the Sovereign who merely looks on, you the Judge who pardons; you who are full of motives and of causes, and who have perhaps instilled in my spirit a taste for horror so that my heart might be converted, as one is healed by the thrust of a blade; Lord, have pity, have pity on all madmen and on all madwomen! O Creator! Can monsters exist in the eyes of Him who alone knows why they exist, how they came to exist, and how they might have averted such a fate?

*ANYWHERE OUT OF THE WORLD*

LIFE is a hospital, in which every patient is possessed by the desire to change his bed. This one would prefer to suffer in front of the stove, and that one believes he would get well if he were placed by the window.

It seems to me that I should always be happier elsewhere than where I happen to be, and this question of moving is one that I am continually talking over with my soul.

"Tell me, my soul, poor chilled soul, what do you say to living in Lisbon? It must be very warm there, and you would bask merrily, like a lizard. It is by the sea; they say that it is built of marble, and that the people have such a horror of vegetation that they uproot all the trees. There is a landscape that would suit you,—made out of light and minerals, with water to reflect them."

My soul does not answer.

"Since you love tranquillity, and the sight of moving things, will you come and live in Holland, that heavenly land? Perhaps you could be happy in that country, for you have often admired pictures of Dutch life. What do you say to Rotterdam, you who love forests of masts, and ships anchored at the doors of houses?"

My soul remains silent.

"Perhaps Batavia seems more attractive to you? There we would find the intellect of Europe married to the beauty of the tropics."

Not a word. Can my soul be dead?

"Have you sunk into so deep a stupor that only your own torment gives you pleasure? If that be so, let us flee to those lands constituted in the likeness of Death. I know just the place for us, poor soul! We will leave for Torneo. Or let us go even farther, to the last limits of the Baltic; and if

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possible, still farther from life. Let us go to the Pole. There the sun obliquely grazes the earth, and the slow alternations of light and obscurity make variety impossible, and increase that monotony which is almost death. There we shall be able to take baths of darkness, and for our diversion, from time to time the Aurora Borealis shall scatter its rosy sheaves before us, like reflections of the fireworks of Hell!"

At last my soul bursts into speech, and wisely cries to me: "Anywhere, anywhere, as long as it be out of this world!"

### XLIX

#### *KNOCK DOWN THE POOR!*

I HAD provided myself with the popular books of the day (this was sixteen or seventeen years ago), and for two weeks I had never left my room. I am speaking now of those books that treat of the art of making nations happy, wise and rich in twenty-four hours. I had therefore digested—swallowed, I should say—all the lucubrations of all the authorities on the happiness of society—those who advise the poor to become slaves, and those who persuade them that they are all dethroned kings. So it is not astonishing if I was in a state of mind bordering on stupidity or madness. Only it seemed to me that deep in my mind, I was conscious of an obscure germ of an idea, superior to all the old wives' formulas whose dictionary I had just been perusing. But it was only the idea of an idea, something infinitely vague. And I went out with a great thirst, for a passionate taste for bad books engenders a proportionate desire for the open air and for refreshments.

As I was about to enter a tavern, a beggar held out his hat to me, and gave me one of those unforgettable glances which might overturn thrones if spirit could move matter, and if the eyes of a mesmerist could ripen grapes. At the same time I

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heard a voice whispering in my ear, a voice I recognized: it was that of a good Angel, or of a good Demon, who is always following me about. Since Socrates had his good Demon, why should I not have my good Angel, and why should I not have the honour, like Socrates, of obtaining my certificate of folly, signed by the subtle Lélut and by the sage Baillarger? There is this difference between Socrates' Demon and mine: his did not appear except to defend, warn or hinder him, whereas mine deigns to counsel, suggest, or persuade. Poor Socrates had only a prohibitive Demon; mine is a great master of affirmations, mine is a Demon of action, a Demon of combat. And his voice was now whispering to me: "He alone is the equal of another who proves it, and he alone is worthy of liberty who knows how to obtain it."

Immediately, I sprang at the beggar. With a single blow of my fist, I closed one of his eyes, which became, in a second, as big as a ball. In breaking two of his teeth I split a nail; but being of a delicate constitution from birth, and not used to boxing, I didn't feel strong enough to knock the old man senseless; so I seized the collar of his coat with one hand, grasped his throat with the other, and began vigorously to beat his head against a wall. I must confess that I had first glanced around carefully, and had made certain that in this lonely suburb I should find myself, for a short while, at least, out of immediate danger from the police.

Next, having knocked down this feeble man of sixty with a kick in the back sufficiently vicious to have broken his shoulder blades, I picked up a big branch of a tree which lay on the ground, and beat him with the persistent energy of a cook pounding a tough steak.

All of a sudden—O miracle! O happiness of the philosopher proving the excellence of his theory!—I saw this ancient carcass turn, stand up with an energy I should never have suspected in a machine so badly out of order, and with a glance of hatred which seemed to me of good omen, the decrepit ruffian hurled himself upon me, blackened both my

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eyes, broke four of my teeth, and with the same tree-branch, beat me to a pulp. (Thus by an energetic treatment, I had restored to him his pride and his life.)

Then I motioned to him to make him understand that I considered the discussion ended, and getting up, I said to him, with all the satisfaction of a Sophist of the Porch: "Sir, you are my equal! Will you do me the honour of sharing my purse, and will you remember, if you are really philanthropic, that you must apply to all the members of your profession, when they seek alms from you, the theory it has been my misfortune to practice on your back?"

He swore to me that he had understood my theory, and that he would carry out my advice.

### L

#### THE GOOD DOGS

*To Joseph Stevens*

I HAVE never blushed, even before the young writers of my time, for my admiration for Buffon; but to-day it is not the soul of this painter of pompous nature that I shall call to my aid. No.

I would much prefer to address myself to Sterne, and say to him: "Descend from the sky, or rise from the Elysian fields, oh sentimental jester, oh incomparable jester, and inspire me with a song worthy of you, in honour of good dogs, of poor dogs! Return astride the famous ass that is your inseparable companion in the memory of posterity, and let the ass not forget to carry, delicately held between his lips, his immortal macaroon!"

Avaunt, Academic Muse! I'll have nothing to do with that old prude. I invoke the familiar, the urban, the living Muse, that she may help me to sing the good dogs, the poor dogs, the dirty dogs, those that everyone turns out of doors,



as if they were plague-stricken and lousy, everyone except the poor who are their allies, and the Poet who looks at them with fraternal eyes.

Fie on the pretty dog, on the conceited quadruped, Danish, King Charles, pug or lapdog, so delighted with himself that he leaps indiscreetly between the legs or on the knees of the visitor, as if he were sure to please; turbulent as a child, silly as a street-girl, sometimes as insolent and surly as a servant! Fie on those fourfooted serpents; shivering and idle, that are called greyhounds, and that have not even enough flair in their pointed muzzles to follow the trail of a friend, nor enough intelligence in their flat heads to play at dominoes!

To the kennel with all these tiresome parasites!

Let them return to their silken, padded kennels! I sing the dirty dog, the poor dog, the homeless dog, the wandering dog, the mountebank dog, the dog whose instinct, like that of the poor, of the gypsy and of the actor, is marvellously sharpened by necessity, that good mother, that true patroness of intelligence! I sing the unfortunate dogs, be they those that wander alone in the sinuous ravines of immense cities, or those that say with blinking, intelligent eyes, to some forsaken man: "Take me with you, and out of our two miseries we shall perhaps make some sort of happiness!"

*"Whither go the dogs?"* Nestor Roqueplan once asked in an immortal essay which he has certainly forgotten, and which only I, and perhaps Sainte-Beuve, still remember. Whither go the dogs, do you ask, you inattentive people? They go about their own affairs; love-affairs, business affairs. Through the mist, through the snow, through the mud, in the burning heat, in the streaming rain, they go, they come, they run, they dart under carriages, excited by fleas, by passions, by their needs and their duties. Like us, they have risen early in the morning, and seek a livelihood or pursue their pleasures.

There are some that sleep in a ruined house in the suburbs and come every day at the same hour to seek alms at a

## PETITS POÈMES EN PROSE

kitchen door in the Palais-Royal! There are others that travel in packs for more than five leagues, to partake of food prepared for them out of charity by certain sexagenarian old maids, whose empty hearts go out to the beasts, because foolish man does not want them. There are still others that, like runaway niggers, frantic with desire, leave their villages from time to time to come to the city and gambol for an hour around some fine bitch, a trifle careless of her toilet, but proud and grateful.

And they are all very punctual, without note-books, without notes and without purses.

Do you know Belgium, the indolent, and have you admired, as I have, those powerful dogs harnessed to the little cart of the butcher, of the baker or of the milk woman, whose triumphant bark betrays their pride at competing with horses?

Here are two that belong to an even more civilized group. Allow me to lead you into the room of an absent mountebank. A bed of painted wood, without curtains, trailing bedclothes spotted with bugs, two straw chairs, an iron stove, one or two broken musical instruments. What miserable furnishings! But please observe those two intelligent beings dressed in clothes at once sumptuous and frayed, wearing caps like troubadours or soldiers, who watch, with the attention of two sorcerers, the nameless thing that simmers over the lighted stove, and out of the centre of which protrudes a long spoon, planted there like one of those aerial masts which announce that the masonry is finished.

Is it not just that such zealous strolling players should take to the road only after having first fortified their stomachs with a strong substantial soup? And can you not forgive the trace of sensuality in the nature of these poor devils who all day long have to endure the indifference of the public and the injustice of a manager who takes all the profits and who, alone, eats more soup than any four actors?

How often have I not smiled and been touched as I contem-

## BAUDELAIRE

plated these four-footed philosophers, these obliging, obedient, devoted slaves, that the republican dictionary might well describe as unofficial, if the Republic, far too concerned with the happiness of men, could find a little time to treat with respect the honour of dogs!

And many times I have thought that somewhere (who knows after all?) there may be a special paradise for the good dogs, the poor dogs, the dirty and lonely dogs, to reward so much courage, so much patience and labour. Swedenborg declares that there is one for the Turks and one for the Dutch.

The shepherds mentioned in Virgil and Theocritus expected, as a prize for their songs, a piece of cheese, a well-fashioned flute or a she-goat. The Poet who sang the praises of poor dogs received as his recompense a beautiful waistcoat, whose colour, at once rich and faded, reminds one of autumn suns, of Saint Martin's summers, and of the beauty of mature women. None of those who were at the tavern in the rue Villa Hermosa will ever forget with what petulance the painter stripped off his waistcoat in favour of the Poet, so convinced was he that it was right and proper to sing the praises of poor dogs.

So might a gorgeous Italian tyrant in the great age have offered to the divine Aretino a dagger studded with jewels, or a Court mantle, in exchange for a precious sonnet or a curious satirical poem. And whenever the Poet dons the Painter's waistcoat, he is compelled to think of the good dogs, of the philosophic dogs, of Saint Martin's summers and of the beauty of mature women.

\* \* \*

### *EPILOGUE*

WITH HEART at rest I climbed the citadel's steep height,  
and saw the city as from a tower, Hospital, brothel, prison,  
and such hells,

## PETITS POÈMES EN PROSE

Where evil comes up softly like a flower.  
Thou knowest, O Satan, patron of my pain,  
Not for vain tears I went up at that hour;

But, like an old sad faithful lecher, fain  
To drink delight of that enormous trull  
Whose hellish beauty makes me young again.

Whether thou sleep, with heavy vapours full,  
Sodden with day, or, new apparelled, stand  
In gold-laced veils of evening beautiful,

I love thee, infamous city! Harlots and  
Hunted have pleasures of their own to give,  
The vulgar herd can never understand.





*LES FLEURS DU MAL*



## LES FLEURS DU MAL

### AU LECTEUR

STINGINESS, SIN, Stupidity, shall determine  
Our spirits' fashion and travail our body's forces,  
And we shall feed on the corpses of our remorse  
Like the beggars who nourish their own vermin.

Our sins are strenuous, cowardly our repentances;  
Abominably we pay for our nights and days,  
As we return gaily along the miry ways,  
Thinking by vile tears to cleanse our cruel sentences.

On the pillow of Evil sits Satan, Hell's Creator,  
Who lulls our Spirits with his mad Sorcery;  
So that the metal of our will is melted magically  
And vaporised by this learned Prevaricator.

The Devil pulls the strings where we sway shrinking!  
In repugnant things we find forms formidable;  
Day by day we descend to the uttermost Hell;  
Where, in the night, we smell the darkness stinking.

As a lewd libertine who bites and who smutches  
The martyred breasts of an abominable Whore,  
We steal our pleasures inside a Brothel's door  
Insidious as the orange-skin one touches.

In our miserable brains, like the seven damnations,  
Swarm, riot, surge, swirl the Demons of the Deep,  
And, when we breathe, that Death who gives us sleep,  
Plunges itself into obscure lamentations.

If ravishment, poison, poignard and conflagration  
Have not with their intolerable designs repainted  
The banal canvas of our Destinies, sin-tainted,  
It is that our Soul, alas! lacks violation.

## BAUDELAIRE

But amidst the jackals, panthers, all hell's devices,  
The scorpions and the vultures, serpents, apes,  
Monsters howling, growling, prowling, yelping shapes,  
In the infamous menagerie of our Vices,

There is one more ugly, more foul, than hell's first dawning!  
And though he makes no great gestures nor great cries,  
He would willingly make of the Earth a ruin of Lies  
And swallow the World in one tremendous yawning.

He is Ennui!—more malevolent than his Mother,  
He dreams of scaffolds as he smokes his houka.  
You know him, this delicate monster, in his felucca,  
—Hypocritical Reader—my co-equal—no, my Brother!

SPLEEN ET IDÉAL





# LES FLEURS DU MAL

## I

### *BENEDICTION*

WHEN, BY a supreme decree of Evil's Expiation,  
The Poet appears in the World, this worn-out City,  
His terrified mother cries in exasperation  
With shrivelled hands toward God, who takes her in pity:

"Ah! that I had not a knot of vipers in reversed revulsion  
Begotten rather than this infamous derision!  
Cursed be forever the midnight of convulsion  
When my womb conceived my expiation and my vision!

Since you have chosen me among curious women, Shame's  
Centre I am, to be thrust out by one man's disgust,  
Because I have not cast into the furious flames,  
Like a love-letter, this stunted monster of Lust.

I shall cast back the hate that overcomes me  
On the infernal instrument of your perversity,  
Fixed in a fever that infamously benumbs me  
Like a plague-stricken tree that shakes incessantly!"

She swallows the foam of hate under her henna,  
Unaware of the infinite divine designs,  
Herself preparing in the depth of her Gehenna  
A hell on earth that uttermost hell maligns.

The Child that is from heredity disinherited  
Endures the sun's implacable intoxication,  
Knowing by all that he eats that his sins are unmerited,  
And that in wine resides his exasperation.

## BAUDELAIRE

He plays with the wind of the wide world that covers  
His enchantment as he sings the Ways of the Cross,  
He knows that the Spirits who follow him are his Lovers,  
So are the Birds, and the Seas in the Storms that toss.

Those he would love fear him, with consternation  
They wonder at his intense audacity,  
Seeking for their sakes to draw from him a lamentation  
As they make a trial of him with fierce ferocity.

With the red wine and with the warm bread he clutches,  
They mixed shaken ashes with their impure spittle,  
With hypocrisy they cast back at him all that he touches,  
And accused themselves of breaking things too brittle.

His wife goes crying in the public places:  
"Since he has found me fair and that he can adore me,  
I shall trade on the ancient idols and their grimaces  
That he must paint until they bow down before me.

With nard and incense and benzoin I shall be sated,  
And with crucifixions and with foods and with wines,  
To know if I can find in the heart of some snarer baited  
An admiration my ardent spirit divines!

When I am tired of the fiercer forces of the hell-rats  
I shall raise my hand in the absolute act of slaying;  
And my nails, sharper than the nails of all the hell-cats,  
Shall seize on his heart and choke him while he is praying.

As a young bird pants in his tremulous trepidation  
I shall tear out his red heart, satiate not its pain,  
And, to assuage my favourite beast in exasperation,  
I shall hurl him this heart with the fury of disdain.

## LES FLEURS DU MAL

Towards the sky where only the High God's Throne is,  
The Poet with his amorous passionate eyes  
Lifted, shall wonder if the Spirit in him alone is,  
That hides from him the vast fury of the people's cries:

"Blessed, O my God, who gives me the quintessence  
As a divine healing of our impurities,  
And as the infinitely finer and purer essence  
Which adds savour to our sensualities!

I know that you shall keep a place for the Poet in Heaven,  
A place with the Legions and with the Nominations,  
And that you shall invite him to the feast that shall be given  
By the Thrones, by the Virtues and by the Dominations.

I know there is a sorrow in the Soul's confessing  
That shall never bite the hateful hollow Hells,  
That, so as to weave my mystical crown by God's own  
    blessing  
The Universe and Time must render up their spells.

But in the land of buried jewels and of the treasures  
Of the unknown metals and of the furious Sea  
There shall be made out of many marvellous measures  
A diadem by your hand woven wonderfully.

For this shall be created only by pure vision,  
Taken from the mirrors of the primitive lights,  
And from the flaming fires of the soul's division  
Out of the veritable hearts of the ancient nights!"

# BAUDELAIRE

## II

### *LE SOLEIL*

ALONG THE outskirts, where the Venetian blinds from ruins  
Hang, shelter of secret luxuries and of new inns,  
Where the ferocious sun strikes with his rage redoubled  
The city and the fields and leaves one troubled,  
I go to fence fantastically where men's crimes are,  
Scenting the corners where my capricious rhymes are,  
Stumbling over certain words and on the pavement,  
Striking on verses, wondering what the grave meant.

This nourishing father, hating the wench who dozes,  
Wakens in the fields the worms that hate the roses;  
He makes one's fears evaporate, tosses one's money  
And fills our imagination with the bee's best honey.  
He rejuvenates those who are fated to use crutches,  
And makes them gay and sweet as the girl one touches,  
And makes the harvest ripen as he cherishes  
The immortal heart before the whole world perishes!

When, like a Poet, he descends into the City,  
He makes vile things seem good, makes base men witty,  
And, as a King, who hates his soul's perdition,  
He enters the hospitals where he finds sedition.

# LES FLEURS DU MAL

## III

### *ÉLÉVATION*

ABOVE THE pools, above the valley of fears,  
Above the woods, the clouds, the hills, the trees,  
Beyond the sun's and the moon's mad mysteries,  
Beyond the confines of the starry spheres,

My spirit, you move with a pure ardency,  
And, as one who swoons in the senses of sound,  
You furrow furiously the immensity profound  
With an indicable and male sensuality.

Fly from those morbid miasmas and their mire;  
Purify your own self in the mid air malign,  
And there drink, as a delicious and rare wine,  
The enormity and the intensity of fire.

Beyond the universe and the vast chagrins  
Which load the smoky air with their existence,  
Joyous is he who can with a bird's persistence  
Rush toward the heavens not fashioned by our sins!

He whose thoughts, like the lark that sings and wings  
Its way at dawn toward the sky in a higher flight,  
Wandering over the immensity of the night,  
Knows the flowers' speech and the speech of silent things!



IV

*CORRESPONDANCES*

NATURE is a Temple where we live ironically  
In the midst of forests filled with dire confusions;  
Man, hearing confused words, passes symbolically  
Under the eyes of the birds watching his illusions.

Like distant echoes in some tenebrous unity,  
Perfumes and colours are mixed in strange profusions,  
Vast as the night they mix inextricably  
With seas unsounded and with the dawn's delusions.

And there are the perfect perfumes of the Flesh,  
That are as green as the sins in the Serpent's mesh,  
And others as corrupt as our own senses,  
Having the strange expansion of things infinite,  
Such as amber, musk, benzoin and sweet incenses,  
That seize the spirit and the senses exquisite.

## LES FLEURS DU MAL

### V

I LOVE the memory of those naked ages  
When the sun shines on wise men's and fool's pages.  
Then the man and woman in their agility  
Exulted and lied not in their anxiety,  
And, the amorous sun caressing their spine, unseen,  
Made far more wonderful their mad machine.  
Cybele, then, in all her products fertile,  
Not finding in her sons the weight of a myrtle,  
Like a warm-hearted she-wolf in the hot noon  
Intoxicated both the Universe and the Moon.  
Man, being robust, had certainly the right  
To be proud of his beauty, mirroring the night,  
Pure fruits of outrages and of virginless night  
When the skin's fevered and the senses bite!

The Poet now, when he desires to conceive  
These native grandeurs, and when he is fain to believe  
In men and women's shameless nudity,  
Feels in his soul a tenebrous cold, a crudity,  
At the mere aspect of those vestments venomous  
That clothe the bodies of monsters poisonous;  
Of withered virgins, uglier than their masks;  
Of these poor bodies, thin, swollen like wine-flasks,  
That the God of the awful, vast, implacable,  
Shrouded in iron shrouds as hot as Hell,  
Of these women, alas! pale as the moths, who emerge in  
The infamous horror of a shrieking virgin,  
Of the maternal vice trailing the heredity  
And all the hideousness of their fecundity!

We have, for certain, many corrupt nations,  
Whose unknown beauties were their tribulations:

## BAUDELAIRE

Visages graven by all the diseases of the heart  
Whose beauty languishes for lack of art:  
But these inventions of our modern Muses  
Could never hinder in sick races the abuses  
Which gave to youth the aspect of a stranger,  
—Nor from Saintly graces, nor from the wind's danger,  
Youth whose clear eyes were simple as water flowing,  
That flows forever over all things, knowing  
The way the wind blows and the planet's visions,  
The heats, the perfumes and the sun's derisions!

# LES FLEURS DU MAL

## VI

### *LES PHARES*

RUBENS, RIVER of Oblivion, garden of idleness,  
Pillow of fresh flesh in love's anxiety,  
Where life grows strong and wild in wantonness,  
Like the air in the air and the sea in the sea.

Leonardo da Vinci—somber mirror of sorcerous terror,  
Wherein sexless creatures that are made magical  
Out of the night's mystery appear in the shadow of terror,  
Like souls in Circe's snares made tragical!

Rembrandt—sad hospital filled full with rottenness,  
Decorated only by an immense Crucifix,  
Where prayers exhale with odours of men's filthiness,  
Traversed by the under worlds beyond the Styx.

Michelangelo—vague void in enormous infinite spaces,  
Whose Christs turn Pagan, and in the night there lingers  
Ghost after famished ghost with anguished faces,  
That tear their shrouds asunder with exhausted fingers.

Wraths of a boxer, a Faun's impudence, Donatello's,  
You who only painted the beauty of the knavish,  
Melancholy as the mere colours of your yellows,  
Puget, King of the criminals, convict's slavish.

Watteau—mad Carnival where madder hearts are winging  
In their butterfly fashion, than these more jolly  
That wander in the shadows subtly swinging  
And floating over this Ball of whirling Folly.

Goya—enormous nightmare filled with things inhuman,  
Of foetuses, of Sabbats and of the Spirit's mockings,

## BAUDELAIRE

Where Spanish children are stript stark naked by naked  
women  
That tempt the Demons as they adjust their stockings.

Delacroix—lake of blood by Evil Angels haunted,  
Shadowed by a green wood's mad mysteries,  
Where, under an angry sky in the night undaunted,  
Pass stifled shadows, Weber's, to their destinies.

These blasphemies, these maledictions, these lamentations,  
These cries, these ecstasies our *Te Deum* divines,  
Are as labyrinthine as our exasperations  
That demand a divine opium after the wines.

This is the cry of the infinitely amorous,  
Hurled by an enormous wind across the flood:  
This is a lighthouse lit with sacred fire for the perilous  
Sailors that shed in the storms for their sins their blood!

These, Lord, are for the Spirits of all our Sages  
That give us signs of our own dignity,  
This intolerable howling of the inevitable ages  
That merge and surge and emerge in Eternity!

VII

*LA MUSE MALADE*

MY POOR Muse, why is your aspect so ominous?  
Your hollow eyes are filled with nocturnal visions,  
And I see change in your complexion, furious  
Folly and horror, taciturn as derisions.

The green-eyed Succubus and the rose goblin luxurious  
Have they poured fear and love from their urn's divisions?  
Has the nightmare, with his wrist despotic and mutinous,  
Drowned you between two fabulous elisions?

I would that exhaling the odour of scents demented,  
Your breast with visions were forever frequented,  
And that your blood flowed always rhythmically,  
Like the sounds of the ancient syllables articulately,  
Where reigned the father of songs, Phoebus, and of rhymes,  
Pan, the great God, the Lord of the Harvest times.



BAUDELAIRE

VIII

*LA MUSE VÉNALE*

O MUSE of my Heart, lover of palaces where meet  
The extremes of heat when the winds of January,  
During the dark hours of winter's misery,  
Howl, had you a firebrand to warm your violet-veined feet?

Did not your shoulders shudder for lack of heat  
When the night's rays fell on you furiously?  
Finding your purse was dry and high the sky,  
Did you find the gold of the vaults in some sinister street?

You must, so as to gain your bread day after day,  
Like a young chorister make the censer sway,  
Chant the *Te Deums* wherein no God was seen,

Or, fasting mountebank, expose your charms and after,  
Hide your soaked tears that do not hide your laughter  
From the common herd's exclamatory spleen.

# LES FLEURS DU MAL

## IX

### *LE MAUVAIS MOINE*

THE ANCIÉNT cloisters on the altar-rails  
Exposed huge pictures of Saint Verity,  
Whose effect, warming their infamous entrails,  
Was to assuage their cold austerity.

When Christ's seeds flourished, what then else avails,  
When illustrious Monks, famed for futurity,  
Painting graveyards, before which the spirit quails,  
Glorified Death's inevitable Irony?

My Soul is a Tomb that, evil Cenobite,  
Since Eternity inhabits day and night;  
The walls of this cloister are odious as the skies.

O, idle monk! God! When shall I ever have finished  
This image of my soul's misery undiminished,  
The travail of my hands and the love of mine eyes?

## BAUDELAIRE

### X

#### *L'ENNEMI*

MY YOUTH was nothing but a storm, tenebrous, savage,  
Traversed by brilliant suns that our hearts harden;  
The thunder and the rain had made such ravage  
That few of the fruits were left in my ruined garden.

Now that I have touched the autumn of Ideas,  
One must use the spade before the whole earth consumes  
Itself like the strangled sons that were Medea's,  
Where the water digs deep holes as damp as tombs.

But who knows if the flowers I dream of and adore  
Shall find in this soil, naked as any shore,  
The mystic nourishment of the magician's art?

—O Sorrow! Time eats our life and mortifies himself,  
And the obscure Enemy who gnaws our heart  
From the blood we lose increases and fortifies himself!

XI

*LE GUIGNON*

To LIFT a load so heavy and crazy  
One must have your courage, Sisyphus!  
If the heart of Tantalus is lazy,  
Art's long, Time's short, for Tantalus.

Far from graves where vermin are feeding  
On bodies in miasmic marshes,  
My heart, my passionate heart is bleeding,  
The very sense within me parches.

—Many a jewel sleeps enshrouded  
In the darkness which is overclouded  
Where the great heart of the midnight broods;

Many a flower in many a room  
Exhales the odour of its perfume,  
Some wanton's scent, the scent of the blood's.

XII

*LA VIE ANTÉRIEURE*

I HAVE dwelt under the reign of Dynasties,  
Where the seas cast under the sunsets flames and fires,  
I have seen the Nile yellowing its moods and mires,  
And, under the Pyramids, Idolatries.

The surges, mirroring the images of the Skies,  
Mixed in a fashion mystical with the choirs  
Of the powerful accents of music richer than lyres,  
The sunset colours reflected in mine eyes.

It is there that I have lived in Sensuality,  
In the midst of the waves and the splendours and the events  
Of the naked slave-girls, impregnated with strong scents,

Who refreshed with their waving fans my Luxury,  
And whose only trouble was to investigate  
The sorrowful secret of my languishing Fate.

XIII

*BOHÉMIENS EN VOYAGE*

THE TRIBE prophetic with their ardent eyes  
Wandér along the roads unendingly,  
With appetites that rend them furiously  
As their imagination that never dies.  
Their women, Oriental merchandise,  
Beside the chariots that roll heavily,  
Gaze furtively on skies that passionately  
Desire the Chimeras of the absent skies.

From their deep holes, the sullen grasshoppers,  
Hearing them pass, repeat their double whirrs;  
Cybele who loves them as she loves her Kings  
Shows them in vision her swift charioteers  
Who fling wide open before these Travellers  
The tenebrous Empire of imperishable things.



## BAUDELAIRE

### XIV.

#### *L'HOMME ET LA MER*

MAN, YOU must always love the Sea with all your passion!  
You see your soul in the infinity of the sea's surges,  
And in your mirror a phantom self emerges,  
Your spirit is a bitter gulf whose sinister fashion

Excites you to plunge into your image which can ravage  
Your very senses, and your heart, that in your breast  
    hammers,  
Hears in its deepest depths the intolerable clamours  
And the lamentations of the sea, unconquerable and savage.

You and the Sea are tenebrous and of an intensity;  
Man, none has sounded the depths of your abysses;  
O Sea, you only know your most intimate riches,  
So jealous you are of your secrets and your immensity!

And yet during all these centuries innumerable  
You fight together pitiless as the swirling water,  
So enormously do you love death and death's infamous  
    slaughter,  
O fighters eternal, O brothers implacable!

XV

*DON JUAN AUX ENFERS*

WHEN DON JUAN descended to the Underworld  
And had given Charon his obolus supreme,  
A sombre beggar, prouder than the Thunderworld,  
Seized both oars as if to avenge his dream.

Showing their open robes and heaving bosoms,  
Women writhed under the dark firmament,  
And, as a crowd of creatures decked with blossoms,  
Behind them a long bellowing came and went.

Demanding his wages, Sganarelle, with laughter,  
Showed Don Luis, in the void where void is none,  
And to the wandering dead, under hell's rafter,  
Seville's famed Jester, his audacious son.

Under her mourning chaste Elvira, shivering,  
Turned to the perfidious serpent, her last lover,  
In one intense and intolerable quivering  
In all her limbs his secret to discover.

Upright in armour, a man of stone from the Ghetto  
Stood at the helm, furrowing the sunless flood;  
But the great Spaniard, fingering his stiletto,  
Gazed on the foam and felt the heat in his blood.

*CHÂTIMENT DE L'ORGUEIL*

IN THESE marvellous ages when Theology  
Flourished with most of sap and of energy,  
It has been said that a Doctor of great parts  
—After having forced the most indifferent hearts,  
And having stirred them, fathomed these hearts' stories,  
After having rushed toward the celestial glories,  
And found these singular ways to himself unknown,  
Where the pure spirits by the wild winds were blown,  
—Like a man risen too high, being seized with panic,  
He howled aloud, then transported by a pride Satanic:  
—“I have lifted thee up too high, Jesus, little Jesus!  
But, if I had desired, being emulous of Croesus,  
To find in default thy shame, since our sins cheat us,  
Thou hadst been no more than a derisory foetus!”

Immediately there went from him his reason.  
The shining of this sun vanished like treason;  
Dark chaos rolled into this intelligence,  
A living temple, once full of opulence,  
Under those heavens which were as pomp to him.  
Silence and night installed themselves in the dim  
Brain as in a cavern of which the key is lost.  
He wandered with the wild beasts, the city's ghost,  
Nothing he saw, no more than certain mummers,  
Of the changes of the winters into the summers;  
Foul, unclean, ugly, like a cast-off toy,  
He was the children's derision and their joy.

XVII

*LA BEAUTÉ*

I AM beautiful as a dream of stone, but not maternal;  
And my breast, where men are slain, none for his learning,  
Is made to inspire in the Poet passions that, burning,  
Are mute and carnal as matter and as eternal.

I throne in the azure with Satan, a Sphinx, sound sleeping;  
This frigid and furtive heart of mine no man divines;  
I hate the movement that displaces the rigid lines:  
Satan has never seen me laughing nor even weeping.

The Poets, before the strange attitudes of my gloom,  
That I assume in my moods of alienation,  
In austere studies all their days and nights consume:

Always, when I draw my lovers with my fascination,  
There are pure mirrors, wonderful as the nights:  
Mine eyes, mine eyes immense—Satan's delights!

BAUDELAIRE

XVIII

*L'IDÉAL*

THERE NEVER shall be the strange beauties of Vignettes,  
Prurient products born of a century malign,  
These feet with buskins shod, these hands with castanets,  
That shall not satisfy a heart like mine.

I leave to Gavarni, the Poet of Sexual Poses,  
His twittering beauties of an hospital too real,  
For never shall I find among these pale faded roses  
A flower that can inflame my red ideal.

What a passionate heart needs for an Abyss sublime,  
It is yours, Lady Macbeth, spirit terrible in crime,  
Or some magnificent dream of Æschylus;

Or you, great Night, Michelangelo's delight,  
That writhes against the shadow of that Light,  
That night of fever fierce and calamitous!

# LES FLEURS DU MAL

## XIX

### *LA GÉANTE*

FROM THE time when Nature in her furious fancy  
Conceived each day monstrosities obscene,  
I had loved to live near a young Giantess of Necromancy,  
Like a voluptuous cat before the knees of a Queen.

I had loved to see her body mix with her Soul's shame  
And greaten in these terrible games of Vice,  
And to divine if in her heart brooded a sombre flame,  
Before the moist sea-mists which swarm in her great eyes;

To wander over her huge forms—nature deforms us—  
And to crawl over the slopes of her knees enormous,  
And in summer when the unwholesome suns from the West's

Winds, weary, made her slumber hard by a fountain,  
To sleep listlessly in the shadow of her superb breasts,  
Like an hamlet that slumbers at the foot of a mountain.



# BAUDELAIRE

## XX

### *LES BIJOUX*

KNOWING MY heart, the dear thing was quite naked,  
And she was wearing one resplendent jewel,  
And even her nakedness, when one could slake it,  
Had the exotic charm of being cruel.

When this world dances most luxuriously,  
This metal world one's imagination transfixes,  
It gives me ecstasy, and I love furiously  
Things thoughtless where the sound with colour mixes.

So she was lying, and she let me love her,  
And from the height of the divan, she in her fashion  
Smiled at the depth of my love the seas swirl over,  
In the infinite immensity of their passion.

Her tigerish eyes, fixed on mine with curiosity,  
Gave her a dream-like air one's sleep uncloses,  
And all this adding to her lubricity  
Transmuted her incredible metamorphoses.

And her arms and legs, her reins and her thighs' spices,  
Undulated, and nothing more divine is  
Than, in mine eyes, visions of her separate vices;  
Her breasts and her belly, grapes of my vine where wine is,

More caressing than all the Angels of Evil,  
To trouble my soul's repose, not to awake it,  
But to excite in me my Satanic revel:  
For there my mistress lay, superbly naked.

## LES FLEURS DU MAL

I thought I saw by a new design united,  
Antiope's haunches: how her flesh seemed to wake up!  
From her waist to the most secret places ignited.  
Superb on her tawny skin the rouge of her make-up!

—And the lamplight dying and that midnight tearing  
The very firelight as it were in sunder,  
Always when the lamplight was least flaring  
It bathed with blood her olive skin, a wonder!

*PARFUM EXOTIQUE*

WHEN WITH eyes closed as in an opium dream  
I breathe the odour of thy passionate breast,  
I see in vision hell's infernal stream  
And the sunset fires that have no instant's rest:  
An idle island where the unnatural scheme  
Of Nature is by savourous fruits oppressed,  
And where men's bodies are their women's guest  
And women's bodies are not what they seem.

Guided by thine odour towards the heat of veils,  
I see a harbour filled with masts and sails,  
Wearied by the sea wind that wearies me,

And in the perfume of the tamarind there clings  
I know not what of marvellous luxury  
Mixed in my soul with the song the mariner sings.

## LES FLEURS DU MAL

### XXII

THEE I adore as the vault of night's pure madness,  
O silent and taciturn, O thou source of pure sadness,  
I love thee more, O fair, when thou fliest from me,  
And when thou seemest, night's sister, the slyest from me,  
Before league upon league the Sea's insanity  
Shall sever us from the immense light's vanity.

I advance to the attack, I climb to the assaults, whose  
    storms are  
As it were beside a corpse where a crowd of worms are,  
And I cherish thee, O Beast implacable and cruel,  
Because thou art more wonderful than a jewel!

XXIII

COULDEST THOU not hurl the Universe into a jewel,  
 O impure woman? Thine own can make thee more cruel  
 When, biting with thy teeth in thy singular game,  
 Thou seemest to cast from thee thy utmost shame.  
 Thy glowing eyes that shine like furious beasts  
 Are like the flames that lick up furious feasts,  
 Using indolently a power beyond their duty  
 Of never knowing anything but their beauty.

Blind and deaf machines poignant in cruelties! sinking,  
 O salutary instrument, to capture world's blood, drinking  
 Shame after shame. Now hast thou not seen thine errors,  
 Seeing thy pallid visage before thy mirrors?  
 The grandeur of this evil thou art but learning,  
 Has it not made thee recoil with the fear of burning  
 Nature herself, for all her delights are hidden,  
 Which makes thee, O woman, queen of sins unforbidden,  
 —Thou evil animal—a genius engender?  
 O sublime ignominy, filthy panderess, and no surrender!

# LES FLEURS DU MAL

## XIV

### *SED NON SATIATA*

BIZARRE DEITY, dark as infernal nights,  
Whose perfume mixes with musk Arabian,  
Work of some Obi, Faustus, that learned man,  
Sorceress with ebony thighs, child of midnights,  
I prefer to all things, opium and the nights,  
Thy mouth's elixir, strange as a Pavane;  
When toward thee my desires in caravan  
Pass, thine eyes assuage mine appetites.  
By those black eyes, vent-holes of thy soul's shame,  
O pitiless Demon, pour on me less flame;  
I am not the Styx to embrace thee nine times, nay,  
Alas! I cannot, Maegera of the Sorrows nine,  
To break thy courage and to set thee at bay  
In the hell of thy bed, become thy Proserpine!



## BAUDELAIRE

### XXV

WITH HER vestments iridescent and undulating,  
Even when she walks it seems as if she dances,  
Like those sly snakes the jugglers, strange signs creating,  
Make coil in cadences and then fall in trances.

Like the dull sand and the deserts and men's fretwork,  
Insensible to suffering and to mere indolence,  
As in the swish and the swell of the waves the network  
Rises, she develops herself with indifference.

In her eyes one sees the refractions of a jewel,  
And in this symbolical nature mixes and drinks  
The inviolate Angel with the inevitable Sphinx,

Where all is diamond, light, gold, steel, more cruel  
Than these, the cold majesty of the woman sterile  
Shines everlastingly like a star in peril.

XXVI

*LE SERPENT QUI DANSE*

I LOVE to see, snake fascinating,  
In thy frame so thin  
Like a rare stuff vacillating  
Shine thy satin skin!

On the depths of thy dark tresses  
With bitter perfumes  
Where the floods of the sun's caresses  
Shine on the odorous wombs

Of the seas, as a ship awaking  
With the wind of morn,  
My soul as a dream forsaking  
Life, of life outworn.

In thine eyes where nothing cruel  
Shines in their desires,  
As a jewel mixed with jewel  
These shoot fires.

As I see thy slow advancing  
In abandonment  
One would say a serpent dancing  
In a tent of scent.

Under the weight of thine own passion  
Thine head fair  
Nods as an elephant's whose fashion  
Is rare as air.

BAUDELAIRE

So thy body reels and revels  
As a lovely ship  
That rolls and plunges on its levels  
Where sea-waves drip.

As a flood the sun surprises  
Under a cloud-wreath,  
When thine exquisite saliva rises  
To the edge of thy teeth,

I drink Bohemian wine that shatters  
Mine own taste  
As a liquid sky that scatters  
Stars that haste to waste!

# LES FLEURS DU MAL

## XXVII

### *UNE CHAROGNE*

THERE ARE some souls that are most amorous  
That know not when the Spirit moans.  
Saw we not, soul, at a corner an infamous  
Carcass strewn on a bed of stones,

Lewd legs in the air, like a lewd woman's passion  
Burning with odious revelations,  
Showing in a sad and cynical and cruel fashion  
Its belly full of exhalations?

The sun shone hotly on all this rottenness  
As if it were in some sense boiling,  
As when Nature in her absolute nothingness  
Cares nothing for her creature's spoiling.

This superb carcass was not even blinking  
Under the aching moon;  
The stench was really beyond all possible stinking  
And on the grass you seemed to swoon.

The hideous flies upon this belly rotten  
Were buzzing like obnoxious hags,  
Black larvae in lurid regions misbegotten  
Were crawling along these living rags.

And all that rose, and all that descended,  
As in a wind of dislocation;  
The body, swollen, might have perhaps offended  
The sense of my exasperation.

## BAUDELAIRE

And all this world like some strange music burning  
As with the wind wrestles a man,  
As the winnowed grain rhythmically turning  
A winnower of the wind shifts in his van.

And these forms vanished as in some upheavement  
As when an artist violently  
Leaves to the world his last and best achievement,  
Not caring for futurity.

Around the rocks a restless bitch was eyeing  
Us with a look of one forsaken,  
As if from the living skeleton she were spying  
The flesh that from it had been taken.

—Yet you were like that filth and rottenness  
Even in its horrible infection,  
Star of mine eyes, sinister of nothingness,  
Passion of mine and my delection!

Yes, such shall serve you, O Queen of all the graces,  
After the ultimate sacraments,  
When you shall wander in the shadowy places  
With the white bones and the elements,

O my Beauty, say to the vermin's quintessence  
That with kisses foul shall bite you,  
That I have kept the form and the divine essence  
Of my lost loves that spite and bite you!

# LES FLEURS DU MAL

## XXVIII

### *DE PROFUNDIS CLAMAVI*

I IMPLORE thy Pity, Thou, the unique, I adore,  
From the depth of the deep gulf where my heart lies dead.  
It is an universal universe of lead,  
Where horror swims in the night's far-reaching shore;  
A sunless heat that has the heat of the blood's,  
For half the year, there the night hides the earth;  
This naked land gives naked toads their birth:  
Besides, no beasts nor birds nor herbs nor woods!

There is no horror in the world that surpasses  
The cold cruelty of the frozen sun that masses  
The immense nights into chaos chaotic;  
I envy the fate of the wild wolves, erotic,  
Who plunge into stupid sleep. What hides itself  
When the skein of Time slowly divides itself?



## BAUDELAIRE

### XXIX

#### *LE VAMPIRE*

THOU WHO, like death's deceiving stroke,  
Knocks at my heart's deep melancholy;  
Thou who, like a troupe of hideous folk  
Of Demons, wines and maddened Folly,

Of mine own my Spirit humiliated  
Makes thine own bed and thy domain,  
Infamous, by whom I am vitiated  
Like the convict fastened to his chain,

Like to the Gambler with his game reversed,  
Like to the drunkard with his wine-bottle,  
Like to the vermin that the carrion throttle,  
—Be thou for ever and ever accursed!

I have said to the sword perfidious  
To lavish on me Liberty,  
I have said to the poison insidious  
To shake me from my lethargy.

Alas! The poison and the sword that crave thee  
Said in disdainful knavery:  
"Thou art not worthy that we should save thee  
From thine accursed slavery,

Fool! from his empire base and bloody,  
If we deliver thee by our hate,  
Thy kisses shall resuscitate  
Thy Vampire and his buried Body!"

## LES FLEURS DU MAL

### XXX

#### *LE LÉTHÉ*

COME ON my heart, soul too cruel,  
Adored tiger with cold caresses:  
I will plunge into that jewel  
Crowning thy too heavy tresses;

Swathe my head in thy skirts swirling  
Perfumes that one never borrows,  
Perfumes of some flower unfurling  
Leaves like loves that hate their morrows.

Sleep were better far than living!  
In a sleep, one fears its waking;  
Bodies' kisses unforgiving,  
All my passions in thee slaking.

All thy sobbings I shall squander  
In thy bed's abyss, beneath thee,  
Drink thy mouth where lost loves wander  
In the shadowy halls of Lethe.

To my destiny obeying,  
One predestined to his evil  
Limbs of mine they may be flaying,  
Yet, if all's not worth the Devil,

I shall seek, as one anointed,  
Hemlock and a drug liquescent  
From thy breasts, where they are pointed  
Where the moon is not senescent.

## BAUDELAIRE

### XXXI

ONE NIGHT when I lay beside a Jewess I had hired,  
As if a corpse were more than corpse-like cold,  
I began to dream beside this body sold  
Of the sad beauty my desire desired.  
Her flesh was not in nakedness attired,  
Only her tragic eyes that a thirst consumed,  
Only her tresses by their own scent perfumed,  
Stung me, and all the shame in me retired.

I might have kissed with fervour thy naked body  
All over from the roots of thy black tresses,  
Dishevelled as the savagery of thy caresses,  
If on one night, when all the stars were bloody,  
Thou hadst, too cruel to be crucified  
On my Sin's Crucifix, thrice lived, thrice died!

## LES FLEURS DU MAL

### XXXII

#### *REMORDS POSTHUME*

WHEN THOU shalt sleep, my fair Tenebrous,  
In the depth of a monument eternally,  
And when thou shalt have for alcove certainly  
A wind-swept cave and a deep grave ruinous;  
When the stone, oppressing thy breasts amorous  
And thy sides made supple by their melancholy,  
Shall hinder thy heart from beating violently  
And thy feet from escaping their ways adventurous;

The tomb, confidant of my dream infinite—  
For the tomb always understands the Poet—  
During sleepless nights when the dire demons flit,

Shall say to thee: "Imperfect harlot, shalt thou know it,  
Know what it is that makes all the damned dead weep?"  
And the vermin shall gnaw thy flesh, destroy thy sleep.

## BAUDELAIRE

### XXXIII

#### *LE CHAT*

COME ON my heart, my amorous cat,  
And keep away from me your claws.  
Are you more amorous than that  
Of metal for agate, passion's pause?  
When my hands take on them to caress  
Your supple back and splendid head,  
And with intoxicatedness  
My fingers fasten on you with dread,  
I see in my spirit my one mistress,  
Her eyes like yours, not that nor this tress,  
But eyes that penetrate my heart,  
And her fair feet that make me start  
As her brown body in my room  
Exhales a dangerous Perfume.

## LES FLEURS DU MAL

### XXXIV.

#### *LE BALCON*

MOTHER OF memories, mother of mistresses,  
O thou, in whom my pleasure bites and smites!—  
Thou givest me the beauty of divine caresses,  
The heart's fire at the midnight of the nights,  
Mother of memories, mother of mistresses!

The nights ignited by the fire's fierce fashions,  
The shadow of the unveiled Invisible,  
How sweet thy breast, thy heart and all its passions!  
We have often said strange things imperishable,  
On the nights ignited by the fire's fierce fashions.

Scents and heats of Hell's Hallucinations!  
Space, and the heart's beating and our changing mood.  
Thou canst give me, O queen of my Adorations,  
The very perfume of thy most precious blood.  
Scents and heats of Hell's Hallucinations!

Night and the absolute horror of a Vision,  
Mine eyes on thine in the dark one's sense depresses,  
When I drank thy blood, thy breath, poison, derision!  
When thy feet slept, when slept thy dishevelled tresses!  
Night and the absolute horror of a Vision.

I know the art of evoking invocation,  
And I have dreamed deep hidden between thy knees  
Of languorous beauties, of thy fascination,  
Thy body's beauty, the savage wind-swept Seas!  
I know the art of evoking invocation!



## BAUDELAIRE

These oaths, these perfumes, these kisses, mad, ferocious,  
Shall these arise from a great gulf interdicted?  
Some deep abyss, sombre, sunless, atrocious,  
The depths of the illimitable seas by our Sins predicted?  
—O oaths! O perfume! O kisses, mad, ferocious!

## LES FLEURS DU MAL

### XXXV

I GIVE thee these Verses so that, if my name  
Shall become as famous in the aftertimes  
As a ship driven hellward by the north wind's flame  
That makes men think of how the spirit climbs

The heights of our Parnassus, fabulous game  
Enough to weary a reader who begrimes  
His face as an Actor's; these shall waft my Fame  
On the mystic chains of all my haughty rhymes;

Accursed being to whom from hell's fell track  
To highest heaven I only answer back!  
O thou, who like a shadow wane as the moon's wane,

Treadest underfoot, as any angel-devil,  
Those stupid slumberers who have sinned and slain  
The beasts they prey on, seize these rhymes, and revel!

BAUDELAIRE

XXXVI

*TOUT ENTIÈRE*

THE DEMON into my haunted room  
Flew up from his infernal vault,  
And said to me: "What of her perfume,  
If I might judge you in default,

That as the Evil spirit dozes  
On her fair body's sorcery,  
Among the red and the black roses  
That give to her her harmony,

Which is the sweetest?"—O my Soul's shame,  
Thou wouldst reply to the Abhorred:  
"Since all in her is fire and flame,  
I prefer nothing, O my Lord."

When all things ravish me, I ignore if  
There is a more seductive passion  
Than the dear Dawn's that I adore if  
Night were more sinister in her fashion.

The harmony is too exquisite  
That governs that strange body of hers,  
For the ineffable analysis of it  
To note the accords of Idolators.

O most mystical transfiguration  
Of all my senses that swoon in the room!  
Her breath makes music her creation,  
Her voice creates its own perfume.

## LES FLEURS DU MAL

### XXXVII

WHAT WOULD you say to-night, poor soul, after what  
fashion,  
What would you say, my heart, heart withered and malign,  
To the most dear, most fair, most good, except that her  
passion  
Must be a sudden silence and a regard divine?

—We shall be proud in singing all her praises,  
Nothing is worth the sweetness of her vanity;  
Her spiritual flesh has the angel's perfume, which amazes  
Those that assume the guise of Insanity.

Whether it be in the night or in the solitude,  
Whether it be on the street or in the multitude,  
Her ghost in the air dances like a torch lit with wine.

Sometimes it speaks and says: "I am fair as Belladonna,  
For the love of me you must love only the Divine;  
I am the Guardian Angel, the Muse and the Madonna!"

BAUDELAIRE

XXXVIII

*LE FLAMBEAU VIVANT*

THEY WAVER before me, those Eyes full of lights,  
That a most learned Angel has inspired with desires;  
They wake, those divine brothers, brothers of the nights,  
That fascinate mine eyes with their myriad fires.

Escaping from all snare and from all sin that's grave,  
They lead me toward Beauty's vain Virginity;  
They are my servants and I am their only slave;  
My entire being obeys this torch's Divinity.

Eyes I adore, you shine with shadows orgiastic  
Like the candles that burn at noon; the Sun with his hot  
breath  
Reddens, never extinguishing their flames fantastic;

These sing the Awakening, you celebrate our Death;  
You advance in singing my soul's eternal shame,  
Stars of which no Sun can ever wither the flame!

## LES FLEURS DU MAL

### XXXIX

#### *A CELLE QUI EST TROP GAIE*

THINE AIR, thy head, thy gesture,  
Nothing to call thee after  
But, in thine own investure,  
A being made of laughter.

The colour to thy pale cheek rushing  
Dazzles all beholders.  
This passes into blushing  
Of naked arms and shoulders.

That shifting colour, know it's  
A serpent's in a valley,  
That in the mind of Poets  
Evokes a flowerless Ballet.

These mad clothes, they are jolly,  
Thy spirit seems to await thee;  
Thou fool to mine own folly,  
I love thee as I hate thee.

And sometimes in a garden  
When I am slowly dragging  
Mine own self, I ask pardon  
Of the sun that's lagging;

And what all surpasses  
In my heart's derision  
Is my hate of grasses,  
Nature's insolent vision.



## BAUDELAIRE

So on a night I owe man,  
When the glow-worm's calling,  
Towards thy treasures as no man  
Thou shalt see me crawling,

Thy flesh to admonish,  
Thy breast pardoned follow,  
And in thy breast astonish  
Flesh with a wound that's hollow,

Vertiginous divining!  
Through thy new lips' aversion  
To infuse in twining  
Venom-stung aspersion!

## LES FLEURS DU MAL

### XL

#### *RÉVERSIBILITÉ*

ANGEL FULL of gaiety, have you known anguish,  
Sobs, sorrows, miseries, remorse, the shame that blushes?  
And the vague terrors of those awful nights when we  
    languish,  
And that hurt the heart like the paper that one crushes?  
Angel full of gaiety, have you known anguish?

Angel full of goodness, have you known hate the eternal,  
The witch tricked in shadow and the tears of malice,  
When we hear beat to arms Vengeance the Infernal,  
That seizes our faculties, makes us drink sin's chalice?  
Angel full of goodness, have you known hate the eternal?

Angel full of health, have you known the Fevers,  
That along the walls of hospitals go sagging,  
Like exiles who seek the sun, find hell's retrievers,  
Who move their lips, foot after tired foot dragging?  
Angel full of health, have you known the Fevers?

Angel full of beauty, have you known the Wrinkles,  
And the fear of ageing, and this hideous commotion  
In the eyes our greedy eyes drank, and in one who sprinkles  
Holy Water, and the mad horror of devotion?  
Angel full of beauty, have you known the Wrinkles,

Angel full of joy, and of light unwonted,  
David dying and desiring health in what adoration  
Of the emanations of thy divine body enchanted?  
But of thee, angel, I implore thy prayers, my sin's salvation,  
Angel full of joy, and of light unwonted!

# BAUDELAIRE

## XLI

### *CONFESSION*

ONCE ONLY, only once, O woman amorous,  
It was no ancient history,  
We walked (in the deep depth of my soul tenebrous  
This memory is no mystery);

It was late; in the heavy sky above us we saw quiver  
The full moon, her watch keeping;  
And the solemnity of the night like a rapid river  
Shone over Paris sleeping.

Along the houses—were these only waking?  
Some cats passed us furtively,  
All on the prowl for prey, like shadows shaking,  
With their insatiable curiosity.

All at once—am I right in my recollection?—  
As it were out of a girl's bosom,  
There came your voice, instrument of mine own delection,  
Just as if a flower might blossom,

From you, as a sonorous and exuberant fanfare  
Before the bright dawn saw crumbling  
One cloud, a plaintive note, a note bizarre  
Escaped from you, as if stumbling,

A fearful child, horrible, sombre, hideous  
As any beaten slave  
Who, for the world's sake had been thrust, perfidious  
Into a hollow cave.

## LES FLEURS DU MAL

Poor angel, she sang, your shrill voice itself fainting:  
"That nothing here is certain,  
And that always, when one has finished one's own painting,  
On one's own self comes down the curtain;

That it is a hard trade to be a fair woman, acquainting  
Herself with the banal passion  
Of a mad dancing-girl whom one sees suddenly fainting  
In a mere mechanical fashion;

That to build our hearts is stupid as a closed casket,  
That all cracks, beauty, Insanity,  
Until Oblivion hurls them into her basket  
To give them back to Eternity!"

I have evoked this enchanted moon and our vision,  
And this silence, quintessential,  
And this horrible confidence whispered on a note of derision,  
At the hurt Heart's Confessional!

BAUDELAIRE

XLII

*L'AUBE SPIRITUELLE*

WHEN IN an Evil House the dawns awaken  
Creatures more sodden than their Destiny,  
By the sudden vision of its mystery,  
In these drunken brutes an angel is suddenly shaken

From the huge height of the spiritual skies,  
For the stricken man who hates his own submersion,  
Dragged into the gulf in hideous immersion:  
So, dear Goddess of Lucid Destinies,

On the smoking ruins of these stupid revels,  
Shine to me from the very dawn of memory  
Where in mine eyes fascination flies incessantly.

The sun has blackened the flames. By all the Devils  
That haunt my Hell and damn me for my Obsession,  
Save not my Soul save by its own Confession!

# LES FLEURS DU MAL

## XLIII

### *HARMONIE DU SOIR*

THE SEASONS make shake in violent vibration  
Flowers that evaporate in a sacred room;  
In the air of the night turn sound and perfume;  
—Waltz vertiginous in intoxication!

Flowers that evaporate in a sacred room;  
The Violin shivers like a heart in agitation;  
—Waltz vertiginous in intoxication!  
The sky is sad as a shrine that the flames consume.

The Violin shivers like a heart in agitation,  
A heart that hates annihilation like the Tomb!  
—The sky is sad as a shrine that the flames consume;  
The Sun is drowned in his blood's coagulation.

A heart that hates annihilation like the Tomb  
Gathers the Past into an Hallucination;  
—The Sun is drowned in his blood's coagulation;  
Thy memory haunts me like an aching Womb!

# BAUDELAIRE

## XLIV

### *LE FLACON*

THERE ARE strong perfumes for which all matter amasses  
Its odour—as if they penetrated the glasses.  
Sometimes in opening an Oriental coffer scentless, dusty,  
Whose lock is grating and reluctant and rusty,

Or in a deserted house where Circe's thinning  
Scents turned Arachne to a spider for her spinning,  
One finds an old yellow flagon that survives,  
From which surges a living soul that thrives.

Ghastly chrysalids—the much more ghastly sleeping  
Of shivering beings in the tapestries we are steeping  
In colours which take flight, such as sea-caves,  
And tints of azure—frozen roses—and gold waves.

Here is the memory of an intoxication  
In the troubled air; the eyes close; annihilation  
Seizes the vanquished soul and then consumes  
Itself amongst the odour of its perfumes.

It destroys its own self near a gulf in a blinding sheet  
Where—like Lazarus malodorous in his winding-sheet—  
It moves in its awakening the spectral corpse that's dead,  
An old tired love's, sepulchral, hallucinated.

Then, when I shall be lost in the Insanity  
Of all that is most sinister in one's Vanity,  
When I am thrown, an old flagon desolated,  
Dusty and foul, abject, viscous, cracked and desecrated,



## LES FLEURS DU MAL

I shall be thine own coffin, amiable Pestilence!  
The witness of thy force and of thy virulence,  
Dear poison prepared by the angel's adorable wine,  
That gnaws me, O life and death of my heart divine!

## BAUDELAIRE

### XLV

#### *LE POISON*

WINE KNOWS how to decorate the Evil Houses  
With a luxury miraculous,  
And to make surge from a sunset fabulous  
The red gold, where the hot sun drowns  
Before he falls into the Ocean perilous.

Opium heightens our unlimited Illusions  
Beyond Eternity,  
Deepens Time, hollows Sensuality,  
And, with the pleasures of our Delusions,  
Fills the soul beyond its own captivity.

All that is not worth the poison that is distilling  
From thy green eyes, to clash on  
Clouds when my soul trembles in an inverse passion;  
My dreams as visions stilling  
Their thirst in the bitter gulfs of furious fashion.

Nothing is worth the horrible projection  
Of thy saliva, thy breath is  
About to plunge my soul where Hades' wraith is,  
And, *charioting* the creation,  
Hurls it hideously where its ultimate Death is!

## LES FLEURS DU MAL

### XLVI

#### *CIEL BROUILLÉ*

ONE MIGHT say your regard was covered with a vapour:  
Your green mysterious eyes that like a taper  
Alternatively tender, drowsy, cruel,  
Reflect the pallid indolence of a jewel.

You recall those days moist, under which the witches  
Betray girls' hearts and steal from them their riches,  
When, agitated by an unknown evil that twists them,  
The awakened nerves scorn the spirit that resists them.

You have the likeness of these tragic treasons  
That excite the suns in their most magic seasons.  
—How you shone, in an enormous interfusion,  
Inflaming the rays that fell from the sky's confusion!

O dangerous woman, O seductive regions!  
Shall I adore your frosts and snows and the legions  
Of locusts and from the pitiless winter environ  
More bitter pleasures from frozen ice and from iron?

## BAUDELAIRE

### XLVII

#### *LE CHAT.*

IN MY brain wanders in vain,  
As in his own appointed room,  
A cat luxurious in perfume  
Who, when he mews, excites my brain,

So sweet and tender is his note;  
But when his voice greatens and thunders,  
His voice is made of several wonders,  
Which is the charm that haunts his throat.

This voice which in its passion hates me,  
And in my tenebrous depth's reverses  
Satiates me as my nervous verses,  
Just as a poison penetrates me.

It sends asleep most cruel evils,  
It contains all the ecstasies;  
But for the sensual harmonies  
It needs no words—not even the Devil's.

No, there is no bow more biting  
On my heart, a perfect instrument  
With strings as if in vision rent  
From chords that vibrate, that are smiting,

Save thy voice, cat mysterious,  
Seraphic cat, cat cynical,  
In whom all is diabolical,  
As subtle, as harmonious!

## LES FLEURS DU MAL

—From his fur, soft as satin for the nonce,  
Exhales a perfume so that, one night,  
I was embalmed in his delight/  
For having caressed him, only once.

He is the familiar spirit of the place;  
He judges, he inspires, presides  
All things in his empire, and, besides,  
Is he not a god before God's face?

When towards this loved cat turn mine eyes,  
Drawn by a something that in it burns,  
Suddenly upon himself he turns,  
And as I regard my Destinies,

I see, I see astonishingly,  
The fire of his eyes on fire,  
The shining opals of my Desire  
That stare upon me fixedly.

## BAUDELAIRE

### XLVIII

#### *LE BEAU NAVIRE*

MY DESIRE is to respire thy charms that are divine  
And all in thee that is more beautiful than wine,  
All this desire of mine  
Is to paint the child whose fashions are malign.

When thou dost wander, thy skirt balances to and fro  
In the wind's embraces from the seas that flow,  
I see in thee a painted show,  
Following an ardent rhythm, languid and slow.

On thy large neck, so pure and undefiled,  
Thy dear head flaunts itself like dancers wild,  
And I, the Exiled,  
Follow thy subtle footsteps, majestic child!

My desire is to respire thy charms that are divine  
And all in thee that is more beautiful than wine,  
All this desire of mine  
Is to paint the child whose fashions are malign.

Thine ardent breasts advance to meet the air,  
Triumphant as the silk that hides them, and rare  
As dancing-girls in vair  
That leave thee to the winds that are most fair.

Provoking breasts, with their red points of roses!  
Secret to none, as any shy rose that uncloses,  
Where perfume with scent dozes  
Delirious to the hearts wherein no rest reposes!

## LES FLEURS DU MAL

When thou dost wander, thy skirt balances to and fro  
In the wind's embraces from the seas that flow,  
I see in thee a painted show,  
Following an ardent rhythm, languid and slow.

Thy noble legs under their draperies bewitching  
Torment obscure desires, set my nerves twitching,  
Like two Sorcerers pitching  
Black drugs to a snake whose ardent coils are itching.

Thy lovely arms that wave luxuriously  
Like unto shining coiling boas furiously  
Press one's heart obstinately  
And leave me, thy Lover, lonely as the Sea.

On thy large neck, so pure and undefiled,  
Thy dear head flaunts itself like dancers wild,  
And I, the Exiled,  
Follow thy subtle footsteps, majestic child!



BAUDELAIRE

XLIX

*L'INVITATION AU VOYAGE*

MY CHILD and my star,  
Let us wander afar,  
None can resist her,  
In the desire of living together;  
—To live there at leisure,  
To die there for pleasure  
Under this wonderful weather!  
The suns that have sunken  
From these skies drunken  
For my spirit have charms and have fears,  
Like the mysteries that rise  
From your treacherous eyes  
That dazzle me over their tears.

There all is beauty, ardency,  
Passion, rest and luxury.

The shapes that are shining  
For our divining  
Shall decorate our chamber;  
The flowers in their flavour  
Shall mix with the savour  
So vaguely voluptuous of amber,  
All these for the sleeper,  
The mirrors are deeper,  
In Oriental splendour  
All these shall be token  
Of the words I have spoken  
In the spirit's sudden surrender.

There all is beauty, ardency,  
Passion, rest and luxury.

## LES FLEURS DU MAL

See how on these Lagoons  
Sleep sinister moons,  
Vagabond and everywhere hurled;  
It is to respire  
Your most passionate desire  
That they come from the ends of the world.  
The suns that are setting,  
All things else forgetting,  
Over the city without pity,  
Are hyacinths for one's keeping;  
—The entire city is sleeping  
In the luminous light of the city.

There all is beauty, ardency,  
Passion, rest and luxury.

## BAUDELAIRE

### L

#### *L'IRRÉPARABLE*

WE HATE Remorse: only can we stifle him,  
Who lives in hideous damnation,  
And feeds on us, like death's worm, none can rifle him,  
In many a devious evasion?  
We hate Remorse: only can we stifle him?

In what phial, in what wine, in what infusion,  
Can we drown this old enemy,  
Destructive and greedy as whores in their confusion,  
Who live and die impatiently?  
In what phial? In what wine? In what infusion?

Tell me, dost thou say it, O fair Sorceress,  
To this spirit filled with anguish,  
Like the dying, the wounded hurt in the battle's press,  
And that in dying, languish,  
—Tell me, dost thou say it, O fair Sorceress,

To this dying man that the wolf is flailing  
And who is watched over by the Crows,  
—To this broken soldier, if he is despairing  
Of having his cross amidst his woes,  
To this dying man that the wolf is flailing?

Can one destroy the night with one's mere scorning,  
And tear the darkness and so mar light,  
Denser than pitch, as night that has no morning,  
A night that has no starlight!  
Can one destroy a night with one's mere scorning?

## LES FLEURS DU MAL

Hope that burns in the windows of the Inn  
Is extinguished, is dead for ever!  
On a moonless night can one find refuge for sin  
In spite of all his wild endeavour?  
—The Devil has snuffed out all the candles in the Inn.

Adorable Sorceress, lovest thou thy damnation?  
Say, knowest thou the Irremissible?  
Remorse, as poisonous as thine own irritation,  
Poisonous as hearts that hate their Hell?  
Adorable Sorceress, lovest thou thy damnation?

The Irreparable gnaws with his accursed tooth  
Our Soul, shame's punishment,  
And he attacks the defences of our youth,  
Our youth in banishment.  
The Irreparable gnaws with his accursed tooth.

—I have often seen, in the depth of a Theatre diurnal,  
Inflamed by an orchestra fabulous,  
A fairy awaken, in a sky infernal,  
A dawn of day miraculous;  
I have often seen, in the depth of a Theatre diurnal,

Garbed in light simply, in gauze, in gold, a Being  
Hurl down the enormous Satan;  
My heart that knows not ecstasy is fore-seeing  
A Theatre when the Powers of Evil greaten  
Always—always in vain—the gauze-winged Being!

## BAUDELAIRE

### LI

#### CAUSERIE

YOU ARE an autumnal sky the spirit knows!  
Sadness within me rises like the sea,  
And leaves, in its ebbing, on my lip morose,  
The bitterness of inexorable misery.

—Thine hand glides in vain over my breast, inhuman;  
What it seeks, dear, is a place—can one sweeten it?  
Ravaged by the ferocious claws of the woman—  
Seek not my heart; the monsters have eaten it.

My heart is a tavern withered by its sin,  
Intoxication and self-slaughter entered in:  
—A perfume wanders over your naked breast!

O Beauty, plague of souls, our soul's unrest!  
With thine eyes of fire, furious as the feasts,  
Calcine these rags spared by the raging beasts!

# LES FLEURS DU MAL

## LII

### *L'HÉAUTONTIMOROU MÉNOS*

TO J. G. F.

I SHALL strike, being more cruel  
Than my hatred, your sweet mouth  
Scented as the sorcerous South!  
And from your red lids, O my jewel,

In my throat's thirst, as I revel,  
Shall gush water that quenches fire,  
And my implacable desire  
On your salt tears shall bring evil,

As a vessel from a distance  
Where my heart's intoxication  
Shall drink your sobs, alleviation  
Of my passionate persistence!

Am I a wrong note that unites me  
With the voracious symphony  
Of that diviner Irony  
Which in sensation smites and bites me?

She is in my voice the shrill shrew, calling!  
She is black poison in all my blood; alas,  
I am the sinister looking-glass  
Where the Medusa sees snakes crawling!

I am the plague, the knife, the treason!  
The cheek that feels the wound! I reel,  
All my limbs quartered on the wheel,  
That reels before me without reason!

## BAUDELAIRE

I am of my own heart the Vampire, token  
Of one compelled to the condemnation  
Of laughter's uttermost damnation,  
Who must wreak in hell what I have wroken!



# LES FLEURS DU MAL

## LIII

### *FRANCISCAE MEAE LAUDES*

*Vers composés pour une modeste érudite et dévote.*

SONGS FROM mine exasperation,  
Dear girl, lithe-limbed, of my creation,  
In heart's solitude's crispation.

This intricately disseminated,  
A woman too delicate to be hated,  
Who saves our souls our God created!

As in Lethe fulminated,  
I shall drain your kisses violated  
In your magnetism impregnated,

When the tempest of our Vices  
Shall shatter the shrines of sacrifices,  
Lo, the Divinity swathed in spices,

As the sailor's star that hovers  
Over many sleepless lovers,  
I shall hang my heart on shrines she covers.

Well-water that is full of virtue,  
Eternal spring of youth desert you  
Never while my kisses hurt you!

What was soiled, burn with aspersion;  
What was ribald, to wrath's reversion;  
What was nerveless, to hell's perversion!

## BAUDELAIRE

For my hunger, tavern-raven,  
Light my midnight, cavern-paven,  
With hell's perils straight to haven.

Add to venom venomous,  
Scented breath, male, odorous,  
Senses strange and savourous!

My lean languid limbs set quivering  
No chaste hints of your delivering,  
Water dyed from pinions shivering:

Golden jewels coruscated,  
Salt bread, Francisca, never tasted,  
Divine wine on your beauty wasted!

## LES FLEURS DU MAL

### LIV

#### *A UNE DAME CRÉOLE*

IN A perfumed land the Oriental sun caresses,  
I have known, under purple tinged trees beside a ford,  
Near palm trees which excited the eyes to idlenesses,  
A creole woman whose beauty was ignored.

Her complexion is hot; the brown-skinned Enchantress  
Has languors as she passes across the sward;  
Slender and straight she walks with leisured loveliness,  
Do not her eyes say unto her: "I am adored"?

If you should go, Madame, to the land of glory,  
On the margins of the Seine you would read the story  
Of the wars of France and of her manor-houses,

You would make, in the deep shades that no sun tracks,  
Germinate sonnets in a Poet's heart that drowns,  
That your eyes would make more cringing than your Blacks.

## BAUDELAIRE

### LV

#### *MOESTA ET ERRABUNDA*

TELL ME, does thy heart fly far from thee, Agathe,  
From the darkness to the foul City on the Sea,  
Toward another sea as fair as any agate,  
Divine as any maid's virginity?  
Tell me, does thy heart fly far from thee, Agathe?

The sea, only the vast sea consoles our labours!  
What Demon has damned the Sea, some hell-bringer  
Of more than sinister Saracenic sabres  
To the sheer sublimity of a death-flinger?  
The sea, only the vast sea consoles our labours!

Carry me far from the city, O meagre maggot!  
Far from Paris where the wind's made of our weeping!  
Is it certain that the sad mad heart of Agathe  
Says: Far from cruel crimes and criminals' sleeping,  
Carry me far from the City, O meagre maggot!

How far you are, Paradise perfumed, painted,  
Where love and joy are mixed and sin is sunken,  
When all one's love is by some passion tainted,  
When the mad heart is tragically drunken!  
How far you are, Paradise perfumed, painted!

But the green Paradise has other gardens,  
That lure in the void where kisses are divine,  
Where the violins dying in the act of Pardons  
Mix in the words with our own blood our wine.  
But the green Paradise has other gardens,

## LES FLEURS DU MAL

The innocent Paradise, full of furtive pleasures,  
Is it more distant than the Indian sea?  
Can one recall with cries of listless leises  
And animate with a voice of active agony  
The innocent Paradise full of furtive pleasures?

## BAUDELAIRE

### LVI

#### *LES CHATS*

THE WISE men love the cats for their perversity;  
They love them passionately in their sensual seasons;  
Sweet subtle cats, so traitorous in their treasons  
That, as they, shiver in their dire adversity.

Lovers of strange science and of sensuality,  
They seek the intense horror that makes them furious;  
They had been seized as his ghastly slaves by Erebus,  
Had they inclined to him their sombre savagery.

They assume in dreaming the ancient attitudes  
Of the great Sphinxes in the depths of their solitudes  
That seem always to sleep in their virginity;  
Their pregnant reins are full of the Signs of Magic,  
Strange sparks of gold, like fine dust, magically  
Shine like stars in their regards, tenebrous, tragic.

## LES FLEURS DU MAL

### LVII

#### *LES HIBOUX*

UNDER THE yew-tree's heavy weight  
The owls stand in their sullen fashions,  
Like Pagan gods of Pagan passions  
They dart their eyes and meditate.  
Unmoving they stare with living flame  
Until the end of the melancholy  
Hour sees the oblique sun set in folly,  
And darkness falls in shades of shame.  
Their aspect to the wise man teaches  
All that he needs, all he beseeches,  
Tumult and change and discontent;  
The man drunk of a shadow that passes  
Keeps always the imperishable scent  
That makes the wind change and the grasses.



BAUDELAIRE

LVIII

*LA CLOCHE FÊLÉE*

It is sweet and bitter, on the winter nights, for our Vices  
To hear, near the fire that palpitates and smokes,  
Our far-off memories and our vast surprises  
Rise to the sound of the carillon the wind evokes.

Wonderful is the bell whose throat is vigorous  
That, despite its age, being utterly content,  
Casts always in the air its cry prodigious,  
Like an old soldier who watches under his tent!

My soul is cracked, and when in its weariness,  
With its songs it broods over the night world's loneliness,  
It happens that its voice—one's misbegotten!—  
Is like the death-rattle of a wounded man forgotten  
Under a heap of the dead, beside a lake of blood,  
And who dies immensely in that huge solitude.

# LES FLEURS DU MAL

## LIX

### *SPLEEN*

#### I

PLUVIOSE, AGAINST the entire City irritated,  
Pours from its great urn a cold that's tenebrous  
Over the pale dead in the graveyard inundated  
By sheer mortality and rains ruinous.

My cat seeking his strange litter ironically  
Twists his thin body cruel and curious;  
A Poet's shadow wanders in the gutter, wearily  
Uttering the cries of a phantom infamous.

The bourdon makes lament and the firewood smokes  
To the sound of the swinging pendulum that chokes,  
Whilst in a game full of foul-hearted perfumes,  
The fatal heritage of an old woman, an old maid's,  
The tragical Knave of Hearts and the Ace of Spades  
Hiss sinister-wise at dead loves their Death consumes.

# BAUDELAIRE

## LX

### *SPLEEN*

#### II

I HAVE more memories than a thousand years.

A certain desk that holds balances and arrears,  
Verses and criminal trials and romances  
And certain women's tresses (after our dances!)  
Hides much more secrets than my brain can hide.  
It is a cavern, a Pyramid on either side,  
That holds more dead people than the common noonlight.  
—I am an abhorred grave and hated by the moonlight,  
Where like remorse trail worms infuriated,  
That always try to madden my dearest dead.  
I am an ancient boudoir filled with passions  
And with pale roses faded in their fashions,  
Where Boucher's plaintive pastels fill the room  
With an astonishing and intense perfume.

Nothing equals the horror of these long days crawling  
When all the storm winds blow and the snows are falling,  
And Ennui, dead fruit of incuriosity,  
Assumes the proportions of Immortality—  
—From this time forward, matter—can one scan it?—  
You are no more than a block of fearful granite  
Around whose base some sacred serpent curled.  
—An ancient Sphinx forgotten by the world,  
Forgotten on the map, wild with her error,  
Sings only in the sunsets of her terror.

# LES FLEURS DU MAL

## LXI

### *SPLEEN*

#### III

I AM like the King of a land of rains and ditches,  
Young and yet old, impotent among my riches,  
Who, scorning the bows of his tutors and of his Priests,  
Endures the weariness of his savage Beasts.  
Neither his hawks nor his game can ever divert him,  
Nor can his people who die before him hurt him.  
He says of a woman: "Who can ever test her?"  
He is unmoved by the ballads of his jester;  
His bed is like a tomb one finds in Cadiz,  
Nor can this fine Prince in his wanton Ladies  
Excite their passions, nor when his wine smells musty,  
Admire to excess their dresses lewd and lusty.  
The wise men who make gold for him never could  
Extirpate the corrupt element in his blood.  
For these baths of blood the Romans used, remember  
Who can, his sins from July to December,  
Have never warmed this cold corpse stupefied,  
Where instead of blood the green waters of Lethe glide.

## BAUDELAIRE

### LXII

#### *SPLEEN*

#### IV

WHEN THE dull dire sky weighs like a heavy cover  
Over the sobbing spirit in prey to Pagan rites,  
And when upon the stern horizon one can discover  
A day made blacker than our infamous nights;

When the entire earth is changed into a prison  
Where Hope, like a wicked night Bat that has forgotten  
The way, goes beating its wild wings from the floor arisen  
And knocks its head against the ceilings rotten;

When the immense winds in the sky, like strong storm-riders,  
Howl into barred windows and walls with pouring rains,  
And when the silent and sinister people of the Spiders  
Spread their inextricable webs in our sorry brains,

Suddenly the bells leap with intense fury thundering,  
Hurling up to the sky their ferocious howling,  
Like unseen spirits that are forever wandering,  
That sob their hearts out at the cloud that's scowling.

And ancient state-carriages, without music, like erotic  
Shades defile very slowly in my sad spirit, and sinister Hope,  
Weeping like one who is vanquished, and anguish, despotic,  
Set on my skull their black flags, in the wind's scope.

## LES FLEURS DU MAL

### LXIII

#### *BRUMES ET PLUIES*

WINDS OF autumn, winters dipped in mud,  
I love you, sleepy seasons, with my blood,  
And praise you that you hide my heart below  
A vaporous shroud that all the tombstones know.

In this great plain where cold as rain I stood  
In the long nights when the weather-vanes creaked like wood,  
My soul renewed itself with sudden heat, and lo!  
My spirit opened its wings like a croaking crow.

Nothing is sweeter to the ravaged heart that clings  
To frost that whitens the whole space of things,  
Than the sad certainty of being hallucinated,  
Except the aspect of a nightless noon,  
—If it were not, on a night without a moon,  
For two to sleep with sorrow on a hazardous bed.

## BAUDELAIRE

### LXIV

#### *L'IRRÉMÉDIABLE*

AN IDEA, a Form, a Being created,  
Hurl'd from the sky and fallen in,  
A Styx as miry and as leaden as Sin,  
Where no eye of the sky has penetrated;

An Angel, an imprudent traveller benighted,  
Tempted by his passion for all deformity,  
In the depths of nightmares, dire enormity  
Struggling with shadows self-invited,

With infernal anguishes coquetting!  
Against a backwater gigantic  
That sings as it surges like madmen frantic,  
And is in the darkness pirouetting;

A wretch bewitched by a wise wild wizard,  
Groping forever and forever falling  
Into the void where the reptiles are crawling,  
Seeking for a key and finding a vizard;

A damned soul descending without lamplight  
Into a gulf where stupefaction  
Turns to an abject putrefaction,  
Down eternal staircases that give but damplight;

A ship seized in the Pole, arisen  
From some deep places where strange men snare men,  
Seeking to find like flying airmen  
How it has fallen into this prison;



## LES FLEURS DU MAL

—Sad symbols, shadowing the imperfect  
Fortune that to fools is as irremediable  
As the certainty that the Devil in Hell  
Has made, as God made, all things perfect!

Face to face now and none dissembles  
That a heart is its mirror absolutely!  
Deep dark Pits of Truth, where veritably  
One livid star in the wan sky trembles,

A lighthouse ironical and infernal,  
Torches of grace Satanical,  
Glory unique, diabolical,  
—Conscience in Evil is Eternal!

## BAUDELAIRE

### LXV

#### *A UNE MENDIANTE 'ROUSSE*

MY WHITE girl with red-gold tresses,  
Let not this one of thy dresses  
Leave bare all the poverty  
Of thine ardency,

For me, poet, soul's my study,  
All that's sad in thy mad body  
Has beside its pure completeness  
Sin's suave sweetness;

Thou dost wear with more perfection  
Than a jesting-girl's dilection  
Velvet shoes that have the passion  
Of some fashion.

Instead of rags, there's no adorning  
Like a superb court gown for morning  
Wear, in certain folds one feels are  
Where thy heels are;

Let instead of silken stockings  
For the rakes and for their mockings  
On thy leg a golden garter  
Their taste martyr;

Let the loose knots be unveiling  
For our sins the unavailing  
Brightness of thy breasts that glisten  
(Let me listen);

That for thy entire undressing  
Thine arms on their own arms pressing  
Chase with mutinous grace what lingers  
In their fingers;

## LES FLEURS DU MAL

—Pearls that spell the soul's disaster,  
Sonnets of Belleau our master,  
In thy lovers one discovers  
Rhyming lovers;

Flocks of rhymesters and cut-purses  
Dedicate to thee their verses.  
How thy slippers, dear, they ogle  
Like a bogle!

Many a page where many a sword is,  
Many a Ronsard where many a lord is,  
Shall for thy sake make a sonnet  
And dream upon it.

Thou shalt count in beds what laden heads  
Shall have possession of thy maidenheads,  
Here a Valois, then a Kingless  
Man that's stingless.

—Yet at last thou must go spying  
A certain ruined creature lying  
On the threshold of some tavern,  
Vefour's cavern;

Then with eyes where all that's cruel  
Shines, for a mere trifling jewel  
That I cannot (I forgive thee!)  
Give thee;

Go then, with no more adornment  
Than the perfume of the morn meant,  
Than the divine impurity  
Of thy purity!

## BAUDELAIRE

### LXVI

#### *LE JEU*

IN FADED armchairs ancient whores are wrangling  
—Heads heavily painted, eyelashes that shock,—  
Who in their meagre ears hear the loud jangling  
And the cruel and criminal tick-tack of the clock;

Around green tables in ominous revulsions,  
Colourless lips, the colour of sin's guests,  
With their infernal fingers in convulsions,  
Fumbling an empty purse or the heaving breasts;

Wonderful ceilings making their grimaces  
Where enormous lamps hurl their atrocious lights,  
Now on this tenebrous Poet, on other faces,  
On all who squander the sad sweats of their nights.

Behold the black picture of a dream nocturnal,  
Flashed on the passion of my visionary eyes;  
Myself, in one corner of this lair infernal,  
I see myself seated, silent, envious of the skies,

Envy in some of these the tenacious passion  
Turned in these whores to a damnable gaiety  
That traffic in my face in an infamous fashion,  
One of her beauty, one of her lost virginity!

And my heart was afraid of envying some poor man sunken,  
In the abysmal depths of his damnation,  
Preferring, having of his own blood heavily drunken,  
Sorrow to Death and Hell to annihilation!

## LES FLEURS DU MAL

### LXVII

#### *LE CRÉPUSCULE DU SOIR*

THE NIGHT comes, friend of the Criminal, suddenly;  
It comes with wolfish steps and cruel passions; the sky  
Closes upon itself like an immense alcove,  
Man, furious, changes himself into a beast wild with love.

O night, adorable night, one's adoration,  
Desired by all who lie and say: To-day in our prostration  
All of us have worked! It is the night that solaces  
Spirits devoured by the woes of loneliness,  
The obstinate wise man who has all things read,  
And the worn out labourer who returns to bed.  
Yet the unclean demons in the atmosphere  
Heavily wake before they have seized on fear,  
And fly and frighten the penthouses and the shutters.  
Across the strange gleams the wind torments, there mutters  
In all the streets intoxicated Prostitution,  
Like a heap of ants that dig their restitution;  
Everywhere Prostitution becomes more difficult  
As one who leads spirits into ways occult;  
Stirring in the heart of the city the utter filth  
Of the enriching gutter's plague-green spilth.  
One hears here and there the kitchens noisily shrieking,  
The orchestras thunder, the theatres are squeaking,  
In the dining-rooms, where one gambles, one surprises  
The prostitutes and the sharpers and all their Vices,  
And the Thieves, who have no mercy nor no truce,  
Must to-day begin their work, thanks to the deuce,  
So as to force upon the doors and the cash boxes  
And live and dress their mistresses, their Doxies.  
Awaken, my soul, at this grave moment and adore  
Thy God and hear no more the city's roar.

## BAUDELAIRE

At this hour the sorrows of the sick are not diminished!  
The sombre night seizes them by the throat—they have  
finished

Their destiny and go toward the gulf, maid, nun;  
The hospital is filled with their sad sobbing—more than one  
Shall never again find perfumed soup in his room,  
By the fireside, at night, nor his mistress's perfume. .

Why is it that these, beyond their sin's forgiving,  
Have never lived nor known the art of living?

# LES FLEURS DU MAL

## LXVIII

### *LE CRÉPUSCULE DU MATIN*

THE AWAKENING sang in the courts of all the barracks,  
And the morning wind breathed on the lanterns like their  
arracks.

This is the hour when the swarms of dreams injurious  
Twist on pillows youths who are much too curious;  
Where, like an aspect that palpitates with dread,  
The lamp on the daylight makes a spot that's red;  
Where the soul, under the weight of the body peevish,  
Fights with the lamp and the daylight, these being thievish.  
Like a face covered with tears that the winds misshape,  
The air is full of the shivers of things that escape,  
And the man is weary of writing and the woman of loving.

The houses begin to smoke and the ever roving  
Wanton women of pleasure, with their eyelids vivid,  
Mouths open, sleep stupidly and awaken livid.  
The poor women, with lean thin breasts, where poverty  
lingers,

Breathe on their firebrands and breathe upon their fingers.  
It is the hour when the niggard lines of the wild bed  
Exaggerate the travail of women in their childbed;  
Like a sob broken by a blood that foams and chokes,  
The cry of the cock lacerates the air that smokes;  
A sea of mists bathes the walls of the edifices,  
And those dying in the hospitals, dreaming of precipices,  
Utter their last death-rattle in their last surmises.  
The debauched went home, worn out by all their vices.  
The yellow dawn in robes of red and green shivering,  
Advanced slowly over the deserted sad Seine quivering,  
And sombre Paris, rubbing its eyes, began to seize  
Its heavy tools, warmed by the breath of the breeze.



## BAUDELAIRE

### LXIX

THE WOMAN servant of whose heart you had been jealous—  
—Does she sleep under the turf who had been zealous?  
We ought to give her certain flowers, to-morrow's.  
The dead, the poor dead, they have much greater sorrows,  
And when, lifter of the old trees, the cold October  
With his melancholy wind that makes men sober,  
Certainly, they must find us, the living, ungrateful,  
Who sleep, as they do, warmly, who yet are hateful,  
Whilst, devoured by black dreams and violent visions,  
Without bedfellows, without even their derisions,  
Old skeletons travelled by the worm, hell's splinter,  
They feel fall over them the snows of winter,  
And without friends see fly Eternity  
Replacing the rags of their mere nudity.

When the firewood hisses and sings, if at the night time  
I see her sit in the chair, if that were the right time,  
A very blue and very cold night of December's,  
And I found her crouched in my room, beside the embers—  
Grave, and coming from her bed eternal,  
Were to brood over her great child with eyes maternal,  
What could I say to this soul, what words could follow  
Words, if I saw fall tears heavily from her eyelids hollow?

## LES FLEURS DU MAL

### LXX

I HAVE not forgotten, adjacent to the City,  
Our pure white house, when we were wise and witty,  
The great Pomona and its ancient Venus  
And the naked busts of the figures that came between us;  
—And the sun, that shone before our days were ended,  
Behind the window, where we enjoyed the offended  
Eyes of the Gods, who pitiless to all sinners,  
Saw all our lazy and luxurious dinners,  
Where we composed, adoring the sunsets, the fashions  
Of Latin Lovers who had assuaged their passions.

## BAUDELAIRE

### LXXI

#### *LE TONNEAU DE LA HAINE*

HATE is the barrel of the pale Danaïdes;  
Vengeance with enormous arms utterly frantic  
Precipitates into the void darkness of the Seas  
Huge buckets full of blood and of snakes that antic.

The Demon in his abysses has made secret hollows  
Through which fly sweating more than a thousand years,  
After his heedless victims Hate hastily follows,  
Makes bleed their bodies, galvanised by his shears.

Hate is a drunkard at the far end of a Tavern,  
Who feels always his intense thirst born of his drink  
Multiply himself like a hydra in a Cavern.

—But the jolly drunkards know to what depths they sink,  
And that Hate endures this pang redoubtable  
Of never having slept even in Hell.

# LES FLEURS DU MAL

## LXXII

### *LE REVENANT*

LIKE THE angels with eyes of mauve  
I shall return to thine alcove,  
And towards thee in silence glide  
Where the shades of the night abide;

I shall give thee, brown girl, soon  
Kisses colder than the moon  
And the caresses of a snake  
Around a ditch, that coils awake.

When there dawns the morning frigid,  
Thou shalt find my place there, rigid,  
Until there comes the terrible night.

In thy passionate heart no truth is,  
Where thy life and where thy youth is,  
I, I shall reign over thee by fright.

BAUDELAIRE

LXXIII

*LE MORT JOYEUX*

IN A foul earth covered with snails and with stones  
I shall dig for mine own self an immense tomb,  
Where I shall full of ease extend my ancient bones  
And sleep in oblivion like a shark on the spume.

I hate the Testaments. I hate the graves and the thrones;  
Rather than implore pity from the waste world's wide womb,  
Living, I would love to invite the crows with the crones  
To make bleed my infernal carcass my sins consume.

—O worms! Dark demons without ears and without eyes,  
You shall see come to you a dead man before Death dies!  
Living philosophers, sons of hell's putrefaction,

You shall go across my ruin with remorseless tread,  
You shall tell me if there is more torture in Hell than  
    Damnation,  
For that soulless body dead amongst the dead!

## LES FLEURS DU MAL

### LXXIV

#### *SÉPULTURE D'UN POÈTE MAUDIT*

IF 'ON a midnight near a new Inn  
One by an act of charity,  
Behind a very ancient ruin  
Buried your body famously,  
At the hour when the cold clouds hide her,  
The Moon, along with small things rotten,  
Sees the webs woven by the spider  
And viper's vipers are begotten:  
You shall hear the ululation  
On your head's condemned damnation  
Of the wolves that howl in the leaves,  
The cries of famished Sorceresses,  
The lusts of men in whore's caresses,  
And the plots of the dark thieves.

BAUDELAIRE

LXXV

*TRISTESSE DE LA LUNE*

TO-NIGHT the moon dreams with more idleness;  
Like a beautiful woman, who on her cushions rests,  
And who with her delicate hand loves to caress,  
Before she sleeps, the contour of her breasts.

Dreaming of love she finds in love's decisions  
A sense of dying, very ardently she swoons,  
And with closed eyes sees pass before her visions  
Of suns that are burning and of the swooning moons.

When sometimes she lets fall upon her bosom  
Her fragrant scent that odorous seems to blossom,  
A certain Poet, sleepless because his art

Excites him, finds that her scent excites his passion,  
Fragments of opals flash after their fashion:  
He hurls against the sun the cries of his Heart.



# LES FLEURS DU MAL

## LXXVI

### *LA MUSIQUE*

THE IMMENSITY of music seizes me like the Sea!  
Toward my star that's pale  
Under a misty sky I furiously  
Set myself to the sail;

And standing there near to the heaving helm  
As the foam fails from me,  
I mount and I descend and the waves overwhelm  
The ship's sides the night veils from me;

I feel vibrate in me the passionate revulsions  
Of a ship that shrieks like a wolf:  
The wild wind and the tempest and its convulsions  
Over the sombre gulf

Lull and annul me—and become monstrously the mirrors  
Of my insensate errors!

BAUDELAIRE

LXXVII

*LA PIPE*

I AM the Pipe of a Great Joker;  
One sees, in contemplating my mien  
Of an Abyssinian, that his Queen  
Knows that my master's a great smoker.

If he sees a woman he can choke her,  
And I smoke exactly like the hovel  
In which one reads a naughty novel:  
He sees her cheeks covered with ochre.

I lull his soul with my own Litany  
That from my mouth on fire like fretwork  
Rises and twists around the network,

I twine around him wild-wood dittany  
That heals the languor of his heart  
And heals his spirit by mine art.

# LES FLEURS DU MAL

## LXXVIII

### *LA DESTRUCTION*

THE DEMON agitates himself at my side, I follow him;  
He swings around me always in the air infernal;  
I feel him burn me hideously, I swallow him,  
He fills me with a desire culpable and eternal.

He sways, knowing my great love of art, strange incenses,  
Takes the seductive form of women over amorous,  
And under a knave's most specious of pretences,  
Accustoms my lips to love-potions infamous.

He leads me, under the regard of God who is deathless,  
In the midst of—broken with fatigue and breathless—  
Those deserted plains of Ennui, with cheeks painted—

And casts in my eyes that are filled with the last Illusion  
Wounds wide-open, blood-red vestments that are tainted,  
And the magnificence of Destruction and of Delusion!

# BAUDELAIRE

## LXXIX

### UNE MARTYRE

*Dessin d'un Maître Inconnu*

IN THE midst of flasks, of stuffs, spangled, moth-consumed,  
And of objects voluptuous,  
Of marbles, pictures and of robes perfumed  
Which trailed in folds luxurious,

In a warm room where never a warm wind passes,  
The air is fatal and dangerous,  
Where bouquets, dying in their thin coffins of glasses,  
Exhaled their last sighs dolorous,

A headless corpse pours out like a river smoking,  
On a pillow that slakes its thirst,  
A red and living blood, of which the linen is soaking  
With the avidity of the Accursed.

Like a pale vision that engenders shadows and obsesses  
The enchantment of eyes too cruel,  
The head, with its immense mass of sombre tresses,  
With many a precious jewel,

On the night table, like a ranunculus  
Reposes, and, void as Orient dyes,  
A vague intense regard makes ridiculous  
The horribly revulsed eyes.

On the bed, stark naked trunk's exposure,  
In the most complete abandonment  
Of the fatal beauty and of its dire disclosure  
Of what God gave it and its scent;

## LES FLEURS DU MAL

A rose-red stocking, with gold coins, on the leg that barter,  
Remains like one's memory;  
And like secret eyes that flame, her famous garters  
Dart rays of sombre mystery.

The singular aspect of this sinister solitude  
And of a great portrait languorous,  
With eyes provocative as her impure attitude,  
Reveal a passion tenebrous,

A guilty joy that feasts like beasts and revels  
Full of infernal kisses,  
Exultant as the swarm of evil devils  
That writhe in the curtain's abysses;

And yet, to see how thin in their secret passion  
The shoulder emaciated,  
The thighs that are too pointed in their fashion  
Like a reptile irritated,

She is so young! Her spirit exasperated  
And her senses and her incenses,  
Were they not made for the hounds of Hell, lacerated  
As her flesh that cries and her senses?

The vindictive man that you could not have, when you were  
living,  
Satiated as if with fire,  
Did he not penetrate your inert flesh with the unforgiving  
Immensity of his desire?

Answer, impure corpse! And by thy tresses rigid,  
Lifting thee with an arm feverishly,  
Tell me, fearful head, has he not on thy teeth frigid  
Fashioned his last kisses furiously?

: BAUDELAIRE

Far from the jesting world, far from the crowd's impurity,  
Far from the mobs incurious,  
Sleep in peace, sinister Sorceress, in thy purity,  
In thy tomb mysterious;

Thine immortal frame, over which sweet dreams hover,  
Shall meet after his breath  
Is out of him, thy most unfaithful lover,  
In the shadow we name death.

## LES FLEURS DU MAL

### LXXX

#### *LESBOS*

MOTHER OF Latin games and Grecian graces,  
Lesbos, whose kisses are magnificent,  
Hot as the nights and fresh as foreign faces,  
These have the passions of girls malevolent,  
—Mother of Latin games and Grecian graces,

Lesbos, where the kisses are profoundly throbbing,  
As seas in storms that furiously are forming  
Into huge waves, the hearts of virgins sobbing  
Deeper than love and in their bosoms swarming:  
Lesbos, where the kisses are profoundly throbbing.

Lesbos, where the Phrynes in their superb acting  
Give voice to all the winds that fly between us,  
The Paphian stars in envy are contracting  
A love for Sappho, jealous of no Venus!  
—Lesbos, where the Phrynes in their superb acting,

Lesbos, land of nights hot and languorous,  
That make at their mirrors, in their sterility,  
Hollow-eyed girls, of their bodies amorous,  
Caress the ripe fruits of their nubility—  
Lesbos, land of nights hot and languorous,

Let Plato frown who had no sense of virtue;  
You draw your pardon from your own excesses  
Of amorous kisses, nothing now can hurt you,  
Unexhausted in your Lesbian caresses.  
Let Plato frown who had no sense of virtue.

Eternity around you seemed to harden  
All of respite that keeps you all from pity



## BAUDELAIRE

In the immensity of an expected pardon  
From an unknown and very distant City.  
Eternity around you seemed to harden.

Who of the Gods will dare to judge you ever  
And give you up to certain hard conditions,  
Whose balances are simply one's endeavour  
To save oneself from self and self's perditions?  
Who of the Gods will dare to judge you ever?

Just or unjust, which do you want for reason,  
Virgins sublime? What shall we have hereafter  
In matters of love and in matters of treason,  
When heaven and hell shall echo back our laughter?  
—Just or unjust, which do you want for reason?

For Lesbos has chosen me as the least ruinous  
Of Poets to sing of the Virgins, lovely, idle,  
For from a child I was admitted to the mysterious,  
Frantic laughter that has nor bit nor bridle;  
For Lesbos has chosen me as the least ruinous

Of Poets who without the least confusion  
Keep watch over the passions of these daughters  
Of fruitful Lesbos women, into the illusion  
Of all that wanders between the winds and waters.  
A Poet who without the least confusion

Knows the sea's passions, how the storm-waves harden,  
And that around the rock for all its sobbing  
The sea one night shall give Lesbos back for pardon  
The adored dead body of Sappho, lifeless, throbbing,  
For the sea's passion, where the storm-waves harden!

Of the male Sappho, the Poet and the Lover,  
Fairer than Venus in her pallid pleasures!

## LES FLEURS DU MAL

—Azure is vanquished by the spots that cover  
The tenebrous circle traced by the mad measures  
Of male Sappho, the Poet and the Lover!

Fairer than Venus on the world arising  
And pouring the treasures of her charms unwonted,  
And her youth's beauty for the sun's surprising  
On the old Ocean of her daughter enchanted:  
Fairer than Venus on the world arising!

—Of Sappho who died of too much passionate dreaming,  
When, insulting the Rite and the Cult invented,  
She had given her body to her loved Phaon, scheming  
More than all body's pride: genius demented  
Of Sappho who died of too much passionate dreaming.

And since this time Lesbos is self-lamented,  
And, despite the cries of the Universe perverted,  
Intoxicates herself, herself tormented,  
Whose cries are heard along her shores deserted.  
And since this time Lesbos is self-lamented!

BAUDELAIRE

LXXXI

*FEMMES DAMNÉES*

I

*DELPHINE ET HIPPOLYTE*

IN THE light of languishing lamps in their recesses,  
On perfumed cushions by their own scent scented,  
Hippolyte dreams of the ravishing caresses  
The curtained skies have never yet frequented.

Her eyes are by the wind of a tempest troubled,  
That have in them the intensity of a division  
Of one who, when the sight of him is doubled,  
Hates the obscure vision of his derision.

In her eyes all the fantasies of her fashion  
Show her sad stupor, her sensuality,  
Her shaken sighs, the accents of her passion,  
And of her rare beauty the fragility.

Filled with a furious joy, at her feet extended,  
Delphine desires her with her eyes' fierce fires,  
As a strong animal on his prey undefended  
Fastens his teeth and dies of his desires.

Strange beauty kneeling before beauty stranger,  
Superb, she breathes in deep, voluptuously,  
The wine of her triumph, nothing now can change her,  
As her feverish frenzy rises furiously.

## LES FLEURS DU MAL

She seeks in the other's eyes where her cruel crime is,  
The silent song that chants her secret pleasure,  
And in her gratitude, for what sublime is,  
Her eyelids beat and her foot dances their measure.

—"Hippolyte, dear heart, thy passion's bud uncloses,  
In the mere act of its long quivering,  
In the harvesting of the fairest of thy roses  
To violent desires itself delivering.

My kisses are as light as a bird's feathers  
That fell out of the mists of evening's errors,  
Kisses like beggars in the dusty weathers  
That have but these as shelter for their terrors.

They shall pass over thee and not discover thee  
In our dim alcove hidden from our City.  
Hippolyte, O turn thy face, I will bend over thee,  
Thou, my soul and my body, my all and my pity,

Turn towards me thine eyes, let futurity  
Flame in thy dear regards, embalm them finely:  
I would lift thy veils for more of night's obscurity,  
To sleep with me in thee and die divinely!"

Hippolyte, lifting her young visage, irritated:  
—"I am not ungrateful and have no repentance,  
My Delphine, I suffer and am disquieted,  
As after a night's repast, over sin's last sentence.

I feel melt in me I know not what obsession,  
As if some ghosts in flesh risen up in body  
Led me in all their horrible procession  
To where the very sunset's stained and bloody.

## BAUDELAIRE

Have we entered any reincarnations?  
Explain, if thou canst, my fear that beats within me:  
I shiver with dread at all of our creations,  
And yet my mouth is thine and thou art in me.

Do not regard me thus, my predilection,  
Thou that I love forever in love's sedition,  
Even if thou wert my sister in election,  
And the very beginning of my own perdition!"

Delphine, shaking her tragic tresses, erotic,  
Writhing like a Sibyl shaken as her spell is,  
With fatal eyes, replies in tones despotic:  
—"Who before Love dare speak of where our hell is?"

There is a curse on those who dream of peril  
And would the first in their stupidity  
Fathom problems unsolvable and sterile,  
And mix with honesty love's cupidity!

He who would unite in a cadence magical  
Shadow with heat and night with noontide's flaming,  
Shall never warm his body's aspect tragical  
In this red sun that loves and knows no shaming!

Go, if thou wilt and find a man that's cruel,  
Offer a virgin heart to his senseless kisses:  
Thou shalt bring to me, livid, a loveless jewel,  
Thy stigmatised breasts, not knowing yet what this is!

Shall our passions here ever be contented?"  
But, the child, seeing some sorrow from her escaping,  
Cries suddenly:—"I feel in my being demented  
An abyss that is my heart, an abyss gaping,

## LES FLEURS DU MAL

Burning as a volcano, deep as the empty spaces!  
Never with this monster shall I be satiated,  
Nor my throat refreshed save with the Furies' graces,  
That burn me to the blood intoxicated.

Our closed curtains might bring isolation,  
And lassitude's repose under the doom-stones:  
I shall find in thy breast annihilation.  
Then sink forever underneath the tomb-stones!"

Descend, descend, Lesbians lamentable,  
Descend the way that leads to hell infernal;  
Plunge in a deep gulf where crime's inevitable,  
Flagellated by a wind driven from the skies eternal,

Where all your torments, and for all the ages,  
Mad shadows, never at the end of your desires,  
Shall never satisfy your furious rages,  
And your chastisement be born of loveless fires.

Never a ray of light shall illuminate your caverns;  
By the holes in walls miasmas insinuating  
Shall flame as lanterns that have lighted taverns,  
Your bodies with foul perfumes permeating.

The sharp sterility of your lasciviousness  
Shall change your skin into discoloration,  
And the furious wind of your concupiscence  
Make your flesh spin in the wind of dislocation.

Far from the living world, in condemnation,  
Wander as wolves after a ghostly vanity;  
Make of your destiny, souls disordered, your damnation,  
And escape the duplicity of your insanity!

# BAUDELAIRE

## LXXXII

### *FEMMES DAMNÉES*

#### II

LIKE BROODING beasts they lie on the wet sands sloping,  
Turning their eyes in the direction of the Seas,  
Feet stretching out to feet and their hands groping,  
They endure strange spasms and bitter agonies.

Some, their breasts seized with their intoxication,  
Hiding themselves in the sombre depths of the woods,  
Utter love's words, who, swift for their damnation,  
Feel in their bodies the responses of the blood's;

Others, like sisters, see from the rocks emerging,  
Apparitions in the forms of fornications,  
Where Saint Anthony saw, as small sly serpents surging,  
The naked purple breasts of his temptations;

There are, that as they hear the panthers growling  
In the mute hollows of their Pagan lairs,  
Call thee to save them from love's fevers howling,  
O Bacchus, luller asleep of ancient cares!

And others, whose breasts love all the Scapularies,  
Hiding a whip for scourge under their vestures,  
Mix, in the sullen nights when midnight marries  
Midnight, their foaming lusts with stricken gestures.

O martyrs, O demons, O monsters, O virgin  
Unvirginal, who hate the venom of the skies,  
Seekers after the Infinite, who see surge in  
Their spirits an immensity of cries,



## LES FLEURS DU MAL

You that in your Hell my soul seeks hallucinated,  
I love you more than one who loves a City,  
For your sad sorrows, for your thirsts unsatiated,  
And for your loveless loves that know no Pity!

BAUDELAIRE

LXXXIII

*LES DEUX BONNES SOEURS*

DEBAUCH AND Death are two detestable Hags,  
Rich and ribald and of kisses prodigal,  
Whose virginal limbs are always draped in rags,  
Whose fervent ardours are demi-virginal.

To the Sinister Poet, enemy of man's money-bags,  
Favourite of Hell, Courtesan and Cardinal,  
Tombs and brothels show, under the infernal flags,  
A bed remorse frequented never, maniacal.

And the coffin and the alcove pregnant to bestir me  
Offer to all of us, like two sisters, listless pleasures,  
Fearful sweetnesses and intolerable pleasures.

Debauch, with unclean arms, when will you enter me?  
O Death, when will you, her rival, her wiles being quaffed,  
On her black cypresses your infected myrtles ingraft?

## LES FLEURS DU MAL

### LXXXIV

#### *LA FONTAINE DE SANG*

SOMETIMES I have seemed to hear my frozen blood  
Flow with the rhythm of a fervent flood,  
I hear it flowing as the swooned sexual Senses,  
Just as I feel my wound: the pain intense is.  
Across the city where it seems most vile  
I cease my breathing for a certain while;  
Blood quenches the thirst of every living creature  
And covers in red nature's ill-favoured feature.

I have desired of subtle and of sorcerous wine  
To send asleep my subtle fears that keep  
My senses drunken and my mind malign.  
I have sought only in love an odious sleep,  
But love to me is no more than a mattress of needles  
Made to give drink to the cruel girls one wheedles!

BAUDELAIRE

LXXXV

*ALLÉGORIE*

SHE IS a woman rich in her caresses  
Who lets her wine fall in her dishevelled tresses,  
The claws of love, poisons of the Evil Houses,  
Glide on her skin as her warm passion drowns.  
She laughs at Death and jests at one that writhes,  
Monster whose hands are sharper than the scythes,  
In her destructive games she is respected,  
In her rude majesty nothing is neglected.  
She has her way of walking and of repose,  
And only Mahomet for her sins she knows,  
And in her arms and in her heaving breasts  
She calls men's eyes to be her servile guests.  
She imagines, this virgin pregnant, that she has curled  
Voluptuously around the serpent world,  
That body's beauty is God's gift in the garden,  
And that all infamy can be consoled by pardon;  
Purgatory she ignores as she ignores Hell,  
When the hour comes she enters the dark cell  
Of Death, and as a phantom of frail Breath  
Re-born she, hateless, gazes upon Death.

## LES FLEURS DU MAL

### LXXXVI

#### *LA BEATRICE*

As I was wandering in my wanton fashion  
Complaining not of Nature's cruel passion,  
And sharpening my thoughts as one that wandered  
As on my heart my poignard I had squandered,  
I saw in midday over my head descending  
A ghastly cloud that with a storm was blending  
Its inhuman self with a troop of demons vicious,  
Like little cruel dwarfs, curious, pernicious,  
That gazed upon me with sudden stupefaction  
As on an admired madman who is out of action,  
And as they winked and chuckled and made a gesture  
They shook off every scrap of their rare vesture.

"Is this really the Caricature of an evil Creature,  
This shadow of Hamlet and certainly not his feature,  
His hair dishevelled, as he sees his City,  
Might one not have for him a sense of pity,  
For this mere knave, for this mere malefactor,  
Who is known to be an abominably bad actor,  
Who wants to interest us only with the thickets,  
With eagles and with flowers and with death's wickets,  
As to us, writers of old plays dramatic,  
He howls his phrases—from an empty attic?"

I might have—had my pride only been sundered,  
Received these demons' shocks and never wondered!—  
Turned suddenly my head and its vain vanity  
On those obscure beings whose sheer insanity  
Had caused a crime the sun might tremble at,  
Had they not have cursed—can I ever dissemble that?—  
My very heart's queen who with impish laughter  
Devoted me and them to the hereafter.

BAUDELAIRE

LXXXVII

*LES MÉTAMORPHOSES DU VAMPIRE*

AND YET the woman, who all things remembers,  
Writhing her limbs as serpents on the embers,  
Beating her breasts, as if herself she hated,  
Utters these words by her musk impregnated:  
—"I, my lips are moist, and I know the science  
Of losing in a bed's depths my defiance;  
I dry all tears of all that have the passion  
For these my breasts, my laughter is their fashion.  
I replace, for those men who see me naked,  
The sun, the moon, the stars, so must you take it!  
I have, dear learned man, the power to rifle  
Flesh in my velveted arms, the strength to stifle  
Certain, when I am naked, such igniting  
To furnace-heat, as they my flesh are biting,  
Who on this mattress swoon, these to enslave me:  
The impotent angels would be damned to save me!"

When out of all my bones she had sucked the marrow  
And as I turned to her, in the act to harrow  
My senses in one kiss, to end her chatter,  
I saw a gourd that was filled full with foul matter!  
I closed mine eyes, all my body shivering,  
And when I opened them, in the dawn's quivering,  
I saw at my side a puppet of derision  
Who had made of its blood too much provision,  
Then fragments of a skeleton in confusion  
That of themselves made a mere mist of illusion,  
Or of a sign-board at the end of a batten  
The winter wind swung, as it seemed, in Latin.

# LES FLEURS DU MAL

## LXXXVIII

### *UN VOYAGE A CYTHÈRE*

MY HEART swung birdlike in its intense distraction,  
And soared in the cordages, hung heavily by its grip:  
Under me swayed and surged the white-sailed ship  
Like a radiant angel filled with intoxication.

What is this sad dark Isle? It is Cythera whose birth  
Was famed in songs, made famous as the fashions  
Of the most ancient and most adulterous passions:  
It is a beautiful and a barren earth.

—Island of sweet secrets and of hearts savourous!  
The superb ghost of the ancient Venus here finds room  
To add her perfume to the sea's salt perfume  
That fills one's spirits with cares calamitous!

Green Island where many a dazzling sunflower dozes  
Under its scented, demented infatuation,  
Where the sad sighs of one's heart in adoration  
Burn and turn like incense over a garden of roses—

And shudder eternally in odours orgiastic!  
—Cythera is only a ruin mocked by the skies,  
A rock-strewn desert troubled by angry cries.  
I saw upturned a singular thing—fantastic!

It was not even a shrine as one might take it,  
Where the young priestess, amorous of her warm sheets,  
Wandered, her body burning with secret heats  
As the warm winds left her entirely naked.



## BAUDELAIRE

But as we suddenly came on the sea's track  
That might have been enough to trouble the swift sea-  
swallows,

We saw on an immense height a hideous gallows,  
Stark on the naked sky and cypress black.

Ferocious birds perched on their pasture in desecration,  
Destroying with rage a hanged man's flesh, once pure,  
Each one planted, as a sharp tool, its beak impure  
In the bleeding corners of this putrefaction;

The eyes were two holes, and from the belly violated  
The horrible entrails hung between his thighs,  
And these fiends, gorged with their hideous merchandise,  
Having clawed him left him absolutely castrated.

Under his feet, a horde of infamous beasts  
Turned round and round him in their stupefaction:  
A much more infamous beast in agitation  
Whirled on himself made furious for these feasts.

Cythera's child, for whom none had ever predicted  
Such extreme tortures and such extreme insults,  
In the expiation of thine infamous cults  
And of thy passions that the grave interdicted,

Ridiculous hanged creature, thine are mine own sorrows!  
I felt at the aspect of thy thin limbs wavering,  
Rise to my teeth like some violent vomiting  
The acrid flood of all one's lost to-morrows;

But, before thine atrocity, O poor devil,  
I have felt all the beaks and the jaws like the anthers  
Of lacerating ravens and of dead black panthers  
That assassinated my flesh like veritable spawns of evil.

## LES FLEURS DU MAL

—The sky was lovely and how fair the Sea;  
For me that instant was at once black and bloody,  
Alas! and I had turned as a shroud turns ruddy  
And my buried heart writhed in its agony.

In thine isle, O Venus, I found only upthrust  
A Calvary symbol whereon mine Image hung,  
—Give me, Lord God! to look upon that dung,  
My body and my heart, without disgust!

BAUDELAIRE

LXXXIX

*L'AMOUR ET LE CRÂNE: VIEUX;  
CUL-DE-LAMPE*

Love is seated on Humanity's  
Skull that must be nameless,  
On this throne and its Profanities  
With his laughter shameless,

Breathes upon the whirling bubbles  
In the wintry weather,  
That rejoin the world's worst troubles  
In the swirling ether.

The globe frail as words unspoken  
Soaring up and screaming,  
Spits his wasted soul that's broken  
In the act of dreaming.

I hear the sad skull's sobs atrocious  
To the bubble that diminishes:  
"This game ridiculous and ferocious—  
What then if it ever finishes?

For what in the air they mouth that's cruel,  
Assassin, is what matters,  
Monster, my morbid love, my jewel,  
My blood, my flesh, it shatters!"

# LES FLEURS DU MAL

## XC

### *LE RENIEMENT DE SAINT-PIERRE*

WHAT HAS God done with all this flood of sacrifices  
Which rises to his Seraphim divine?  
As a tyrant intoxicated with his wine  
His fearful sleep is haunted by his vices.

The sobs of martyrs slain, hallucinated,  
Are an enormous monstrous Symphony,  
Since, despite the rich blood of their sensuality,  
The eternal Skies are never satiated.

—Ah! Jesus, dost thou remember the olive-garden?  
Didst thou not kneel and pray—where none avails—  
To him who in heaven laughed at the sound of the nails  
Planted in thy living sides without God's pardon;

When thou sawest spit on thy Divinity  
The filth of the kitchens where guards drank the wines,  
And didst feel driven deep the execrable spines  
On thy skull where lived immense Humanity;

When from the horrible weight of thy broken Body  
Stretched thy distended hands, and when thy blood  
And thy sweat poured from thee as a ravaging flood,  
When thou wast almost naked, almost bloody,

Didst thou dream of these immaculate visions  
When the eternal promise had come to pass,  
When thou dost trample, seated on a gentle ass,  
On the narrow ways of the world and their derisions,

## BAUDELAIRE

Where, with hearts' hope and hatred of the advances  
Of the vile merchants thou didst scourge with rods,  
Being Master then? Had not the thought of God's  
Remorse penetrated thy sides before the Lances?

I shall leave Life satisfied, after the trial  
Of the world where dream and action are absurd:  
Might I use the sword and perish by the sword!  
Saint Peter has denied Jesus? God's denial?

# LES FLEURS DU MAL

## XCI

### *ABEL ET CAÏN*

RACE OF Abel, drink and be sleeping:  
God shall smile on thee from the sky.

Race of Cain, in thy filth be creeping  
Where no seeds of the serpents die.

Race of Abel, thy sacrifices  
Shall flatter the nose of the Seraphim;

Race of Cain, shall thy devil's devices  
Come to an end in any Inn?

Race of Abel, time for thy seed-time  
And for thy cattle to be accursed.

Race of Cain, shall there not bleed time  
In thine entrails that howl with thirst?

Race of Abel, warm thy belly in Caverns  
When the midnight hour is stark.

Race of Cain, tremble in thy taverns  
As thou hearest the jackals bark.

Race of Abel, fear not pollution!  
God begets the children of nights.

Race of Cain, in thy heart's solution  
Extinguish thy cruel appetites.

## BAUDELAIRE

Race of Abel, drowse and be trembling  
As the lice in the haunted wood!

Race of Cain, on the roads dissembling  
Trail thy progeny that cries for blood!

Ah, race of Abel, thy carrion's bloody  
And shall follow the smoking soil!

Race of Cain, thy head that's muddy  
Is not made for the viper's coil.

Race of Abel, let thy shame be shriven:  
The sword is vanquished by the rod!

Race of Cain, mount up to thy heaven  
And cast from heaven to the earth thy God!



# LES FLEURS DU MAL

## XCII

### *LES LITANIES DE SATAN*

O THOU, wisest of angels in Heaven's mazes,  
God betrayed by Fate and deprived of praises,

O Satan, have pity of my intense misery!

O Prince of Exiles, to whom God has done wrong,  
Who, being vanquished, vanquishes the strong.

O Satan, have pity of my intense misery!

Thou who knowest all, King of the wings of Thunder,  
Healer of Evils, that leave God in wonder.

O Satan, have pity of my intense misery!

Who to accursed Animals that have lived on lies  
Teachest by love the taste of Paradise.

O Satan, have pity of my intense misery!

O Thou, who of Death, thine ancient and mad mistress,  
Engenders madder Hope—deceived by this tress!

O Satan, have pity of my intense misery!

Thou who, canst damn upon a scaffolding  
A criminal who conspired against a King.

O Satan, have pity of my intense misery!

Thou who knowest in what hidden lands rare Spices  
Are hid where thy jealous God hid precious vices.

## BAUDELAIRE

O Satan, have pity on my intense misery!

Thou who knowest the secrets of the Arsenals that keep  
The people of Metals shrouded in deep sleep.

O Satan, have pity of my intense misery!

Thou whose huge hand conceals the precipices  
From the Somnambulist stumbling on Hell's abysses.

O Satan, have pity of my intense misery!

Thou who dost rub with oil and balm the old bones  
Of benighted drunkards fallen on the stones.

O Satan, have pity of my intense misery!

Thou who to give to man his ultimate passion  
Makes him mix madness with a wanton's fashion.

O Satan, have pity of my intense misery!

Thou who didst seal an intolerable sign  
On Midas, of all misers the most malign.

O Satan, have pity of my intense misery!

Thou whose cult of rags and plagues and scarlets  
Excites the eyes, incites the hearts of Harlots.

O Satan, have pity of my intense misery!

Staff of Exiles, conspirator's lamp, high Priest,  
Who confesses hanged men in some bloody Feast.

O Satan, have pity of my intense misery!

## LES FLEURS DU MAL

Father of those who in his huge derision  
God the Father chased from Paradise in perverse vision,

O Satan, have pity of my immense misery!

Glory and praise to Thee, Satan, in the heights,  
Of Heaven where thou didst reign, and in the immense nights  
Of Hell where, in the deep silence pregnant thou broodest!  
Let my soul repose under the Tree of Science, rudest  
Of deaths in life, until that ultimate Hour  
Sound, for our sakes, on Hell's eternal Tower!

## BAUDELAIRE

### XCIII

#### LE VIN

#### L'ÂME DU VIN

ONE NIGHT, the soul of wine sang in all the bottles;  
"Man, towards you I thrust, O dear disinherited,  
Under my prison of glass, my red wax throttles,  
A song of one's light love's hallucinated!

I know that on the flaming hill one surrenders  
One's pain and sweat and the heat of the sun furious,  
For out of one's veritable spirit life one engenders,  
But I shall not be ungrateful or injurious.

I feel an immense joy when I fall in a room  
Into a man's throat worn by his work, some knave's,  
So much so that his warm breast is a sweet tomb,  
Better than when I exist in my frozen caves.

Do you ever hear the riotous, rough refrains of the Sundays,  
And the hope that in my breast is like a scent?  
Elbows on the table, shirt-sleeves pulled up, on Mondays  
You will glorify me and you will be content.

I shall make glow of the eyes of your dear wife ravished;  
To your son I shall give force to cling and to nestle  
Against the frail athlete of life on whom I have lavished  
The oil that strengthened the muscles of those who wrestle.

I shall let fall in you, vegetable that no man curses,  
The precious grain sown by the Sower eternal,  
So that from our love might emerge my passionate verses  
That shall return towards God from the Hells infernal!"

# LES FLEURS DU MAL

## XCIV

### *LE VIN DES CHIFFONIERS*

OFTEN, IN the red flaring light of the night lamps,  
When the wind beats the flame before the night decamps,  
In the heart of an old suburb, a labyrinth, foul,  
Where humanity growls in storms while the skies growl,

One sees a rag-picker nodding his head, we know it,  
Stumbling and hitting the walls like any Poet,  
Who, while hating his spies, his subjects, not his Muses,  
His heart exults in plans his sense confuses.

He swears on oath, he dictates laws sublime,  
Knocks down the wicked and forgets the time,  
And under the firmament where no fiends can hurt you,  
He astonishes himself with his own proper virtue.

Yes, those people who endure their own vexation,  
Travailed and tormented by their exasperation,  
Jaded and martyred under wild wastes the wind harries,  
In a confused vomiting of our enormous Paris,

Return, perfumed by odorous wines and thus,  
Followed by their friends curious and furious,  
With all the splendour of the ancient hours,—  
—Triumphant arches, flags and banners and flowers,

Arise before them by some solemn magic!  
And in the luminous orgy strange and tragic  
Of clarions, of the sun, of cries, of drums, there is enough  
To intoxicate the people drunk with love!

## BAUDELAIRE

It is thus that across frivolous Vanity and Humanity  
The wine ran gold, the Pactolus of Insanity;  
'And in men's throats it sings its fierce achievement,  
And reigns by its gifts like Kings in some upheavement.

So as to drown rancour and to lull the indolence  
Of those accursed creatures who die in wickedness,  
God, seized with remorse, made sleep for everyone:  
Man added Wine, the sacred son of the Sun!

## LES FLEURS DU MAL

### XCV

#### *LE VIN DE L'ASSASSIN*

MY WIFE is dead and I am living!  
Now I can drink till I am drunk.  
When I returned my purse had shrunk,  
My very fibres, unforgiving!

No King is more luxurious;  
The air is pure, splendid the weather.  
—That summer that we spent together  
When I was furiously amorous!

—This terrible thirst tears me in tatters,  
And yet I need the intoxication  
Of wine that holds her grave's damnation  
And nothing more; nay, nothing matters.

I hurled her into the depths of a pit,  
And I pushed over her what her grave meant:  
The whole heap of the hideous pavement  
—Forget her? As soon as I cease to spit!

And in the name some souls have shrunk  
From which nothing can unknot us—  
Not even the demons that begot us—  
When we had reason to be drunken,

I sent her word—the obscure night we had—  
To meet me, as in our old folly.  
She came! What madness to be jolly!  
We are all of us more or less mad!

She was intolerably jolly,  
Yet tired: and I who loved her, I,



## BAUDELAIRE

Loved her too much;—and that is why  
I said to her: Out of life's folly!

Alas, as one can comprehend me,  
These drunkards, in their dreams invidious  
To make of wine a shroud? Perfidious  
These nights of mine that bite and rend me.

This invulnerable concupiscence  
As the machines that the roads splinter,  
Has never known, in summer or winter,  
Love veritable in magnificence,

With all its sombre incantations,  
And all its retinues infernal  
Of Phials of poison, its diurnal  
Clanking of chains, bones, dislocations!

—I am alone and free from slaughter!  
And I shall be dead drunk to-night;  
Then, perhaps, before my soul takes flight,  
The earth shall be my bed, earth's daughter,

Never to waken me from slumber!  
The chariot with its heavy wheels—  
Mad thought that in my spirit reels!—  
May in its rages without number

Destroy my guilty head and level  
All of my limbs. Let the loud hills nod!  
I shall mock myself as I mock my God,  
The Holy Table and the unholy Devil!

## LES FLEURS DU MAL

### XCVI

#### *LE VIN DU SOLITAIRE*

THE SINGULAR regard of a wanton woman dissembling  
Her nerves which glide toward you like one's duty  
Neglected when the wandering moon is trembling  
Before she bathes the nakedness of her beauty;

The last gold coins in a gambler's fingers; confessing  
What else, the lewd kiss of the meagre Adeline?  
The sounds of a music encircling and caressing,  
Like the cry of human sorrow toward the Unseen,

Nothing of this is worthy, O profound bottle,  
Of your pregnant belly's penetrating balms that throttle  
Some Poet's throat, who loses and wins the odds;

You offer him hope, youth, but not life's slavery,  
—And pride, this treasure of all knavery,  
That makes us triumphant and equal with the Gods!

## BAUDELAIRE

### XCVII

#### *LE VIN DES AMANTS*

TO-DAY SPACE is splendid and idle!  
Without bit, without spurs, without bridle,  
Let us ride on wine's back, for wine is  
As divine as the sky divine is!  
As two angels of cruel evil  
That follow the tracks of the Devil,  
The wings of the creature we follow  
On the wings of the winged Apollo.  
Now in the air we are swaying,  
On the whirlwind's wings that are fraying  
The way where delirium takes us;  
And the Devil knows we are praying  
Without respite for the soul that forsakes us,  
To find dreams when the dawn awakes us!

# LES FLEURS DU MAL

## XCVIII

### *LA MORT DES AMANTS*

WE SHALL have beds filled with strange scents odorous  
And deep divans like graves where the suns shine,  
And stranger flowers that are more savorous  
Than these under the skies that shine like wine.

Vying with each other in their last heats languorous,  
Our hearts shall be two vast torches, mad, malign,  
Which shall reflect their lights luxurious  
In our twin spirits, mirrors of the Divine.

On a night made of rose and blue after our fashion,  
We shall exchange an unique flash wherein our passion  
Shall sob like Circe's snared by her strange Spells:

Then shall an angel shadowing our shames  
Revive, after their descent into their hells,  
The mirror tarnished and the deathlike flames.

BAUDELAIRE

XCIX

*LA MORT DES PAUVRES*

It is Death who gives us life in excitation,  
It is the end of life, the one hope, the one delight,  
That, divine elixir, is our Intoxication  
And which gives us the heart to follow the endless night.

Across the skies and the snow and our exultation,  
This exhales in us and gives us an appetite  
In the famous Inn inscribed on the Book of Damnation,  
When we can always eat, sleep and write;

Where there is an Angel who holds in his hands magnetic  
Slumber and the great gift of dreams ecstatic,  
And who remakes the bed of the poor who are naked;

It is the God's glory, it is the mystical attic,  
The poor man's purse, our sense of the dramatic,  
The thirst of the Unknown skies and the Thirst to slake it!

# LES FLEURS DU MAL

## C

### *LA MORT DES ARTISTES*

How *MANY* times must I shake my stupid shins  
Before I kiss your hideous visage, Caricature?  
To hit the mark, O mystical quadrature,  
How many, O quiver, lose of my javelins?

We lose our soul in subtle plots to save our sins,  
We must demolish many a sinister Signature,  
Before we seize the great Creature's nomenclature,  
Whose infernal desire throbs in our sensitive skins!

There are those who have never known their Idol,  
And these damned Sculptors and their Capuchins  
Who at the Confessional absolve our sins,  
Have but one hope, O Paris, for some bridal!

And as the whirling world before us spins,  
Let Death rush to the abyss fast in Hell's gins!





*LES PARADIS ARTIFICIELS*



To J. G. F.

MA CHÈRE AMIE,

Common sense tells us that terrestrial things have but a faint existence, and that reality itself is only found in dreams. To digest our natural and our artificial happiness, one must first have the courage to swallow it, and those who perhaps best deserve this happiness are precisely those to whom human felicity, as we mortals conceive it, has always had the effect of an emetic.

To stupid minds it might seem singular, and even impertinent, that a picture of artificial pleasures should be dedicated to a woman, who is the most natural source of the most natural pleasures. Nevertheless it is evident that as the natural world penetrates the spiritual world, serves as pasturage to it, and thus concurs in bringing about this indefinable mixture that we call our individuality, that woman is the one being made to cast the greatest shadow or the greatest light over our dreams. Woman is fatally suggestive; she lives another life than her very own; she lives spiritually in the imaginations that she haunts and fertilizes.

Besides, it is of little consequence whether the reason for this Dedication be understood. Is it even necessary, for the writer's satisfaction, that any kind of book be understood, except by him or by her for whom it has been composed? Is it, indeed, indispensable that it should have been written for *anyone*? I have, for my part, so little taste for the living world that, like certain sensitive, idle women, who it is said, send their letters by post to imaginary friends, willingly would I write only for the dead.

But it is not to a dead woman that I dedicate this little

## BAUDELAIRE

book; it is to one who, though ill, is always active and living within me, and who now turns her eyes in the direction of Heaven, that realm of all transfigurations. For, just as in the case of a dangerous drug, a living being enjoys the privilege of being able to find new and subtle pleasures even in sorrow, in calamity and in fatality.

You will see in this narrative a man who walks in a sombre and solitary fashion, plunged in the moving flood of multitudes, and who sends his heart and his thoughts to a far-off Electra who at one time wiped his sweating forehead and *refreshed his lips parched with fever*; and you will guess the gratitude of another Orestes whose nightmares you so often watched over, and whose troubled sleep you soothed with a light and maternal hand.

## *THE POEM OF HASCHISCH*

### I

## *THE TASTE OF THE INFINITE*

THOSE WHO know how to observe themselves and who remember their impressions, those who have known, like Hoffmann, how to construct their spiritual barometer, have often had occasion to note, in the observatory of their thought, strange seasons, luxurious afternoons, delicious minutes. There are days when man awakens with a young and vigorous genius. Hardly have his eyelids been freed of the sleep that sealed them, before the outer world presents itself to him in strong relief, with a great clearness of contour and wealth of admirable colours. The moral world offers its vast perspectives, full of new light. The man, gratified with this sense of exquisite loveliness, unfortunately so rare and so transitory, feels himself more than ever the artist, more than ever noble, more than ever just, if one can express so much in so few words. But what is most singular in this exceptional state of the spirit and of the senses, which I can without exaggeration term paradisiacal if I compare it with the hopeless darkness of ordinary daily existence, is that it has not been created by any visible or easily definable cause. Is it the result of careful hygiene or of a wise diet? These are the first explanations the mind offers; but we are forced to realize that this marvel, this prodigy, occurs as if it were the effect of a power superior and invisible, exterior to man, at a period when the latter has abused his physical faculties. Shall I say it is the reward of assiduous prayer and of spiritual ardour? It is certain that a continual elevation of desire,

## BAUDELAIRE

a concentration of the spiritual forces on heavenly matters, would be the proper way to bring about this brilliant and glorious state of moral health; but by virtue of what absurd law does it sometimes manifest itself after guilty orgies of the imagination, after some sophistical abuse of reason which is to its honest and reasonable use what dislocation is to the strong gymnast? That is why I prefer to consider this abnormal condition of the spirit as a true grace, as a magic mirror wherein man will find a flattering reflection of his own image, wherein he will see himself as he should or could be; a kind of angelical excitement, a call to order in a complimentary form. In the same manner, a certain spiritualistic school, which has its followers in England and in America, considers supernatural phenomena, such as the apparition of ghosts, of dark demons, etc., as manifestations of the divine will, seeking to awaken in man's spirit the memory of invisible realities.

Besides, this charming and singular state, when all the forces are in equilibrium, when the imagination, marvellously powerful as it is, does not involve the moral sense in perilous adventures, when an exquisite sensibility is no longer tortured by diseased nerves, those criminal advocates of crime and despair, this marvellous state, I repeat, has no premonitory symptoms. It is as unexpected as a phantom. It is a sort of hallucination, but an intermittent hallucination, from which—were we wise—we might derive the certainty of a better world and the hope of attaining it by a daily exercise of our will. This keenness of mind, this enthusiasm of the senses and of the spirit, must always have appeared to man as the most precious of his possessions; that is why, thinking only of his immediate pleasure and without considering the laws of his constitution that he was violating, he has sought to find in physical science, in pharmaceuticals, in the most vulgar drinks, in the most subtle perfumes, in all climates and in all times, some means of escaping, were it only for a few hours, from his home in the mire, and, as the author of

## LES PARADIS ARTIFICIELS

*Lazare* said: "D'emporter le paradis d'un seul coup." Alas! Man's vices, horrible as they are supposed to be, contain the positive proof (were it only for their infinite expansion!) of his taste for the Infinite; only it is a taste which often goes astray. One could take in a metaphorical sense the vulgar proverb: *Every road leads to Rome*, and apply it to the moral world; all leads either to recompense or to chastisement, the two forms of Eternity. Man's mind overflows with passions; he has enough *to sell over again*, if I may use another trivial expression; but this poor mind, whose natural depravity is as great as its sudden aptitude, half paradoxical, for the most ardent virtues and charities, is pregnant with Paradoxes, which permit him to use for an evil purpose this excess of overflowing passion. *Man will never believe that he has entirely given himself over to evil*. He forgets, in his infatuation, that he is playing with someone keener and stronger than himself, and that the spirit of Evil, even if one gives it no more than a single hair, will eventually carry away the head. Therefore, this visible lord of visible nature (I speak of man) desired to create Paradise with the help of pharmacy, of fermented drinks, exactly like a maniac who would replace his solid furniture and real gardens with decorations painted on canvas and mounted on easels. I believe that in this depraved sense of the Infinite lies the reason for all guilty excesses, from the solitary and concentrated intoxication of the man of letters, who, obliged to turn to opium for relief from some physical suffering, and having thereby discovered a source of morbid enjoyment, little by little makes it his one hygiene and the sun of his spiritual life, from such a one to the most repugnant case of drunkenness seen in our streets of Paris, when a man, his brain afire with flame and glory, ludicrously wallows in the filth of the road.

Among the drugs most capable of creating what I call *The Artificial Ideal*, leaving aside drink, which excites us to the point of physical fury and which destroys our spiritual force, and the perfumes, the excessive use of which, while



## BAUDELAIRE

they make man's imagination more subtle, gradually exhaust his physical force, the two most powerful substances, those whose use is the easiest and the nearest at hand, are Haschisch and Opium. An analysis of the mysterious effects and morbid pleasures which these drugs can cause, the inevitable punishment which is the result of too continual a use of them, and finally of the immorality implied in the pursuit of a false ideal, constitute the subject of this Study.

The study of Opium has been made, and in a manner so brilliant, so medical, and so poetic, that I dare not add anything to it. I shall content myself, therefore, by giving, in another study, an outline of this incomparable book, which has never been entirely translated into French. The author, a famous man, of exquisite and powerful imagination, who at the present time lives a retired and silent existence, has dared—with tragic sincerity—to confess the enjoyments and the tortures he formerly derived from Opium, and the most dramatic part of his book is where he speaks of the super-human efforts of will he was obliged to make in order to escape the damnation he had so imprudently brought upon himself.

I shall now only speak of Haschisch, and I shall base myself on various and minute information, on notes and the confidences of intelligent men who have taken Haschisch for years. Only, I shall combine these various documents in a kind of treatise, choosing a Soul, one easy enough to explain and to define, as a type proper for experiences of this nature.

## II

### *WHAT IS HASCHISCH?*

THE NARRATIVE of Marco Polo, which has been wrongly ridiculed, like that of other ancient travellers, has been verified by experts on the subject and therefore should be

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taken on trust. I shall not repeat how the old Man of the Mountain confined in a garden full of rare delights, after having intoxicated them with Haschisch (from whence, Haschischins or Assassins), those of his youngest disciples in whose imagination he desired to inculcate an idea of paradise, as a kind of recompense for their passive and thoughtless obedience. The reader might, with reference to the secret society of the Haschischins, consult Mr. de Hammer's book and the notes of Mr. Sylvestre de Stacy, contained in Volume XVI. of the *Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, and, with reference to the etymology of the word *Assassin*, his letter to the editor of *Le Moniteur*, inserted in Number 359 of the year 1809. Herodotus relates that the Scythians heaped up grains of hemp on which they threw red-hot stones. It was for them a kind of vapour bath—more perfumed than any Grecian sweating-rooms, and the enjoyment was so intense that it made them shout with joy.

Haschisch comes to us from the East; the exciting properties of hemp were known in ancient Egypt, and it has been much used, under different names, in India, Algeria and Arabia. But we have before us, under our very eyes, curious examples of intoxication caused by vegetable emanations. Not to speak of children who after having played and rolled over and over in heaps of new-mown lucerne, experience a strange dizziness, we know that when the hemp fields are harvested, the men and women workers are subject to a similar experience, as though there emanated from the harvest a noxious exhalation which maliciously troubled their brains. The harvesters' heads whirl, sometimes full of dreams. At certain moments their limbs relax and refuse to move. We have heard of frequent cases of sleep-walking among the Russian peasants, the cause of which, I am told, must be attributed to the use of hemp-seed oil in the preparation of their food. Who does not know of the strange antics of chickens that have eaten grains of hemp-seed, and the furious excite-

ment of horses that the peasants, on their nuptials and feast-days, prepare for a steeple-chase by a ration of hemp-seed, sometimes sprinkled with wine?

All the same, French hemp is unfit for the purpose, or at least, after frequent experiments, it has been found impossible to extract a drug from it as powerful as Haschisch. Haschisch, or Indian hemp, *cannabis indica*, is a plant of the nettle family, and not unlike the hemp that grows in our soil, except that it never attains the same height. It possesses extraordinarily intoxicating qualities and, for some years, has attracted the attention of French scholars and men of the world. It is more or less esteemed, according to its different origins; that of Bengal is the most highly considered by those who adore it; nevertheless, those who live in Egypt, Constantinople, Persia and Algeria, enjoy the same effects, but in a lesser degree.

Haschisch (or herb, that is to say herb par excellence, as if the Arabs had tried to define in one word *L'herbe*, source of all immaterial pleasures), has several names, according to its composition and the mode of preparation it has undergone in the country where it was harvested; in India, *bangie*; in Africa, *teriaki*; in Algeria and Arabia, *madjound*, etc. It is important at what season of the year it is gathered, for when it is in flower it possesses its greatest energy; the flowery extremities are, in consequence, the only parts used in the different preparations of which we shall speak.

The *Extrait gras* of Haschisch, when the Arabs prepare it, is obtained by boiling the extremities of the fresh plant in butter with a little water. They steam it, after the complete evaporation of all the humidity, and thus obtain a preparation that has the appearance of a green-coloured ointment, and which preserves the disagreeable smell of Haschisch and of rancid butter. Under this form, it is used in little round pellets of two to four grains; but on account of its repugnant odour, which increases with time, the Arabs put up the *extrait gras* in the form of a preserve.

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The jam they make most use of, *dawamesk*, is a mixture of *extrait gras*, of sugar and of various aromatics, such as vanilla, almonds, musk, pistachio nuts, cinnamon. Some add a pinch of cantharides for a reason which has nothing to do with the usual results of Haschisch. Under this form Haschisch is not at all disagreeable, and one can take it in doses of fifteen, twenty and thirty grains, either in a wafer, or in a cup of coffee.

The experiments made by Smith, Gastinel and Decourtive, resulted in the discovery of the active principle of Haschisch. Despite their efforts, its chemical combination is almost unknown; but its properties are generally attributed to a resinous matter which is found in strong doses—about ten per cent. To obtain this resinous matter, the dry plant is ground into coarse powder and washed several times in alcohol that is subsequently distilled so as to retain part of it; it is allowed to evaporate until it attains the consistency of the extract; then this extract is treated with water, which dissolves gummy matters foreign to it; and the resinous matter remains in a pure state.

The product is soft, of a dark green colour, and possesses in a high degree the characteristic odour of Haschisch. Five, ten, fifteen centigrammes are enough to produce surprising effects. But Haschischine, which can be taken in the form of chocolate pastilles or of little ginger pills, has, like *dawamesk* and *extrait gras*, a more or less strong effect and a variable nature, depending on the temperament of each individual and his susceptibility to nervousness. Better still: results vary for the same individual. Sometimes it produces in him an immoderate and irresistible gaiety, sometimes a sensation of well-being and of the joy of living, at other times doubtful sleep disturbed by dreams. Nevertheless certain phenomena sometimes recur fairly regularly, especially with people of similar temperament and education; there is a kind of unity in this variety which enables me to write this treatise on Intoxication of which I have already spoken.

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In Constantinople, in Algeria and even in France, certain people smoke Haschisch mixed with tobacco; but then the phenomena in question only appear in a very mild and idle form, so to speak. I have heard it said that someone had recently, by means of distillation, extracted from Haschisch an essential oil which seemed to possess a virtue far more active than any preparation known heretofore; but it has not been sufficiently studied for me to speak with any certainty of its results. Is it not superfluous to add that tea, coffee and liqueurs are powerful adjuvants that hasten more or less the dawn of this mysterious intoxication?

### III

#### *THE THEATRE OF SERAPHIM*

WHAT DO you experience? What do you see? Marvellous things, extraordinary sights? Is it wonderful and terrible and really dangerous? Such are the usual questions that the ignorant address to the adepts with a curiosity mixed with fear. It is a childish impatience for knowledge, like that of people who have never left their fireside, when they find themselves in the presence of a man who has returned from distant and unknown lands. They imagine the intoxication of Haschisch to be a prodigious land, a vast theatre of prestidigitation and of jugglery, where all is miraculous and unexpected. That is a prejudice, a complete mistake. And since, for nearly all readers and questioners, the word Haschisch suggests the idea of a strange, overthrown world and the desire for prodigious dreams (it might be better to say hallucinations, which are, besides, less frequent than we suppose), I shall hasten to observe the important differences which separate the effects of Haschisch from the phenomena of sleep. In sleep, that nightly voyage of adventure, there is something truly miraculous; it is a miracle



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whose punctuality has dulled the mystery. Men's dreams are of two kinds. Some, full of his ordinary life, of his pre-occupations, of his desires, of his vices, are combined in a more or less strange manner with things seen during the day, that have become indiscriminately fixed on the vast canvas of his memory. That is the natural dream: it is the man himself. But the other kind of dream! the dream that is absurd, unexpected, that bears no relation to the character, to the life, to the passions of the dreamer! This dream, that I shall call hieroglyphical, evidently represents the supernatural side of his life, and just because it is absurd, the ancients believed it to be divine. As it is inexplicable by natural causes, they have attributed it to a cause exterior to man; and even to-day, without speaking of the Dream Interpreters, there exists a philosophical school which sees in dreams of this kind now a reproach, now an advice; in short, a moral and symbolical picture, born in the mind of the sleeper. It is a dictionary that should be studied, a language of which the Wise can find the key.

In the intoxication of Haschisch, nothing of the kind. Our dreams are natural; our intoxication, however long it may last, is only, it is true, an immense dream, thanks to the intensity of the colours and rapidity of the thoughts; but it will always keep the particular tonality of the individual. Man wanted to dream, the dream will govern man; but this dream will be the son of its father. The idler used his ingenuity artificially to introduce the supernatural in his life and in his thought; but after all, and despite the accidental energy of his sensations, he is only the same man enlarged, the same number raised to a higher power. He is subjugated, but, unfortunately, only by himself, that is to say by what is already dominant in his nature; *il a voulu faire l'ange, il est devenu une bête*, momentarily very powerful, if one can call power an excessive sensibility, without control for moderating or for exploiting it.

Men of the world and those who are ignorant, if eager

to experience unusual pleasures, should know that in Haschisch they will find nothing miraculous, absolutely nothing but what is extremely natural. The brain and the organism on which Haschisch operates, give only their ordinary, individual phenomena, increased, it is true, as to number and energy, but always faithful to their origin. Man cannot escape the fatality of his physical and moral temperament: Haschisch will be, for man's familiar thoughts and impressions, a mirror that exaggerates, yet always a perfect mirror.

Here is the drug before your eyes: a little bit of green jam, no more than a nutful, singularly odorous, to such a point that it sickens the stomach and makes one faintly nauseous, though any fine and even agreeable odour would have the same effect, were it intensified to its maximum of force and of density, so to speak. Allow me to observe, by the way, that this proposition can be inverted, and that the most repugnant, the most revolting perfume, might perhaps become pleasant, if it were reduced to its minimum of quantity and of expansion. Here, then, is your happiness! It hardly tries the capacity of a small table-spoon! Happiness with all its intoxication, all its follies, all its absurdities! You can swallow it without fear: no one ever died of it. It will not injure your physical organs. Later, perhaps, a too frequent appeal to this magic might undermine the strength of your will, perhaps you will be less a man than you are to-day; but the punishment is so distant, and the future disaster to one's nature so difficult to define! What do you risk? To-morrow a little nervous fatigue. Every day do you not risk greater punishments for smaller rewards? Thus, it is said: You have even diluted your dose of *extrait gras* in a cup of black coffee, to give it greater strength and effect; you have been careful to have an empty stomach, postponing your dinner till nine or ten o'clock, so as to let the poison act; at the most, in an hour from now you might take some soup. You have now sufficient ballast for a long and



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strange voyage. The whistle blows, the sails are set, and you have the curious advantage over the ordinary traveller of not knowing where you are going. You wanted it; hurrah for fatality!

I presume that you have taken the precaution of selecting the right moment for this adventurous expedition. Every perfect Debauch requires perfect leisure. Besides, you know that Haschisch not only magnifies the individual, but also circumstances and environment; you have no duties to accomplish that require punctuality, exactitude; no domestic cares; no love-pangs. For you must be careful. This grief, that anxiety, or the memory of a duty that demands your will and your attention at a given moment, shall sound like a death-knell through your intoxication, and shall poison your pleasure. Anxiety will change to anguish; grief to torture. But if all these preliminary conditions are observed, and the weather is good; if you are in a favourable environment, such as in the midst of a picturesque landscape or in a room artistically decorated; if, moreover, you can hope to hear some music, then all's for the best.

There are generally three stages in the intoxication of Haschisch that are easy to distinguish, and it is certainly curious to observe, in a novice, the first symptoms of the first stage. You have vaguely heard tell of the marvellous effects of Haschisch: your imagination has conceived a certain idea, something like an ideal form of intoxication; you are eager to know if the reality will come up to your expectations. This is enough to throw you, from the very beginning, into a state of anxiety, certainly favourable to the conquering and pervasive humour of the poison. Most novices, during the first step of their initiation, complain of the slow effects; they wait for these with childish impatience, and, as the drug does not act rapidly enough for them, they give way to a blustering incredulity which is extremely amusing to the old Initiates who know all the effects of Haschisch. The first effects, like the signs of an approaching storm,

appear and multiply in the midst of this incredulity. First, it is a certain hilarity, irresistible, ludicrous, which takes possession of you. These motiveless attacks, of which you are almost ashamed, frequently recur, and they interrupt the intervals of stupor during which you vainly try to collect yourself. The simplest words, the most trivial ideas, take on new and strange shapes; you are even astonished to have found them so simple, heretofore. Incongruous resemblances and associations impossible to foresee, interminable puns, comical absurdities, rush continually through your brain. The Demon possesses you; it is useless to protest against this hilarity, as painful as being tickled. From time to time you laugh at yourself, at your foolishness and your folly, and your friends, if you have any, laugh just as boisterously at your condition and their own, but, as they are without malice, you bear no rancour.

This hilarity, now languishing and now poignant, this uneasiness in joy, this insecurity, this sick indecision, usually last only a short while. Soon the association of ideas becomes so vague, the conducting thread that holds together your conceptions so tenuous, that only your accomplices can understand you. And even here, on this subject and from this view, there are no means of verification; perhaps they think they understand you, and the illusion is reciprocated. This frolicsome spirit, these outbursts of laughter, which are like explosions, seem like true madness, or at least like a maniac's stupidity, to every man who is not in the same state as you are. On the other hand, wisdom, common sense and the regularity of thoughts in those present who are not intoxicated, delight and amuse you, as if they were a particular kind of lunacy. The parts are inverted. His composure drives you to the last limits of irony. Is it not a mysteriously comical situation when a man profoundly enjoys something that is incomprehensible to another who has not placed himself in the same situation? The madman pities the wise man, and from then on the idea of his superiority begins

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to dawn on the horizon of his intellect. Soon it will develop, grow and burst like a meteor.

I was present at a scene of this nature that was carried too far, and the grotesque side of which was unintelligible except to those who, by observing others, understood the effects of the substance and the enormous difference in diapason that it creates between two supposedly equal intellects. A famous musician, who was ignorant of the virtues of Haschisch, and who perhaps had never even heard of it, was introduced to a group of people, several of whom had taken the drug. They tried to make him understand its marvellous effects. At their prodigious tales, he smiled gracefully, complacently, like a man who is quite willing to *pose* for a few moments. His failure to understand was immediately felt by those whose minds the poison had sharpened; and he was hurt by their laughter. Their shouts of joy, their puns, their changed faces, all this unhealthy atmosphere irritated him to such a point that he declared, perhaps sooner than he had intended, that that artists' burden was vicious and that, besides, it must be very tiresome for those who were carrying it. Laughter lighted up their faces like a flash of lightning. The noise became more uproarious. "This *burden* may be good for you, but not for me," he said. "That it is good for us is enough," egoistically replied one of these intoxicated men. Not knowing if he had to do with madmen or with men who were simulating folly, our artist thought it would be wise to retire; but someone locked the door and hid the key. Then another, speaking for them all, knelt before him and begged his pardon, insolently declaring with tears in his eyes that despite his spiritual inferiority, which perhaps aroused a sense of pity, all those present felt a deep friendship for him. The musician decided to remain, and after repeated requests, even condescended to play some music. But the sounds of the violin, as they spread through the room like some new form of contagion, *seized* (the word isn't too strong) first this, then that,

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intoxicated man. There were deep, hoarse sighs, sudden sobs, showers of silent tears. The terrified musician stopped suddenly, and, going up to one of those whose beatitude made the most noise, asked him if he were suffering and if he could do anything to relieve him. One of those present, a *practical man*, proposed lemonade and acids; but the intoxicated man, opening his ecstatic eyes, gazed on both of them with unutterable scorn. To think of healing a man sick with too much life, sick with joy!

This anecdote shows that benevolence holds an important position among the sensations caused by Haschisch; a silent, lazy, soft benevolence, occasioned by the sensibility of the nerves. To corroborate this observation, a man told me of an adventure which he had had while in this state of intoxication, and as he very clearly remembered his sensations, I understood perfectly how that difference of pitch and level of which I have spoken could cause him grotesque embarrassment. I don't recall whether the man in question had been at his first or second experience. Had he taken too strong a dose, or had the Haschisch produced, for no apparent reason (which happens often enough), more vigorous effects? He told me that in the midst of his pleasure, of his supreme delight at feeling himself full of life and of believing himself full of genius, he had suddenly encountered terror. After having been amazed at the beauty of his sensations, he had been suddenly frightened by them. He began to ask himself what would happen to his mind and to his body if this condition, that he took to be supernatural, became worse, if his nerves became more and more delicate. Due to the power of exaggeration possessed by the spiritual eye of the patient, this fear must have been a terrible torture. "I was," said he, "like a runaway horse heading for an abyss, wanting to stop and being unable to. Truly, it was a fearful gallop, and my thought, slave of circumstance, of environment, of accident and of all that might be implied in the word *chance*, had taken an absolutely rhapsodic turn.

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'It is too late!' I said to myself in despair. When this feeling ceased, after having lasted for what seemed to me an infinite length of time and which perhaps had taken no more than a few minutes, when I believed that at last I could enter into that state of beatitude so dear to the Orientals, which follows this furious phase, I was overwhelmed by further misery. A trivial anxiety possessed me. I suddenly remembered that I had been invited to a dinner to meet some important men. I saw myself there, in the midst of an intelligent and quiet gathering, and where everyone had self-control, I was obliged to hide most carefully the state of my mind, in the light of many lamps. I was certain I should succeed in hiding my state of exasperation, yet I felt desperate at the thought of the effort I should have to make. I know not by what accident these words of the gospel: "Woe to him through whom scandal arises!" came into my mind; but in trying to forget them I only repeated them over and over again. My misery (for it was a real misery) then assumed gigantic proportions. In spite of my weakness I decided to act and consult a chemist; for I ignored what reactives there were, and I wanted to go into the world, where duty called me, with a free mind. But on the threshold of the shop a sudden thought seized me, which held me for several moments and made me reflect. I had seen my reflection while passing in front of a glass window, and my face had astonished me. That pallor, those curled lips, those enormous eyes! 'I shall frighten that good man,' I said to myself, 'and for what a stupid reason.' Add to this, the ridicule I wanted to avoid, the fear of finding people in the shop. But my sudden solicitude for this unknown chemist dominated all my other sentiments. I imagined this man to be as sensitive as I was myself at that ghastly moment, and as I also imagined that his ear and his soul must vibrate at the least noise, just like mine, I resolved to enter the shop on my toes. I cannot (I thought) show too much discretion when approaching a man whose sense of charity I shall



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startle. I promised myself that I would deaden the sound of my voice and the noise of my feet; you know it, the Haschisch voice? Grave, profound, guttural, not unlike that of the opium-eater. The result was the exact contrary of what I wanted to obtain; for, determined to reassure the chemist, I terrified him. He knew nothing of this malady; he had never heard of it. He gazed at me with curiosity and distrust. Did he take me for a madman, a malefactor or a beggar? Neither the one nor the other, probably; but all these absurd ideas passed through my mind. I was obliged to explain to him at great length—with what fatigue!—the nature of the hemp-seed paste and how I used it, repeating over and over that there was no danger, that he had no reason for being alarmed, that all I wanted was an emollient, a reactive, and insisting frequently on the sincere regret I felt at giving him so much trouble. Finally—please understand the concentrated humiliation I endured as he uttered these words—he simply asked me to *leave the shop*. Such was the reward of my charity and of my exaggerated good-will. I went to the dinner: I scandalized no one. No one suspected the superhuman efforts I had to make in order to resemble the rest of the company. Never shall I forget the tortures of an ultra-poetical intoxication, thwarted by an enforced decorum and a sense of duty!”

Though I am naturally drawn to sympathize with all sorrows born of the imagination, I couldn't help laughing at this story. The man who told it to me has not been cured; he still continues to ask the poison for that excitement he must find within himself; but as he is a prudent man, a man of the world, he has decreased the dose, which allows him to increase their number. He will soon perceive the evil results of this hygiene.

I return to the regular development of the intoxication. After the first stage of childish mirth there is a momentary lull. But new events soon manifest themselves by a sensation

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of coldness in the extremities (which, for some people, can be an intense cold) and a great weakness in the limbs; you then have trembling hands and, in your head, in all your being, you feel an awkward stupor and stupefaction. Your eyes dilate, as if they were drawn in all directions by an implacable ecstasy. Your face becomes pallid, your lips thin, as if they were sucked into the mouth by the act of inhaling which characterizes the ambitious man a prey to great projects, oppressed by vast thoughts, or saving his breath to get a better start. The throat is contracted, so to speak; the palate is tormented by a thirst it would be infinitely sweet to slake if the delights of idleness were not more agreeable and were not opposed to the slightest disturbance of the body. You heave deep, raucous sighs, as if your old body could not endure the desires and activity of your new soul. From time to time you shudder, and this forces you to make an involuntary movement, like those nervous jumps which, at the end of a day's work or during a stormy night, precede one's real sleep.

Before going any further I wish to relate, in regard to the sensation of coldness I mentioned above, an anecdote which will serve to show to what point effects, even purely physical ones, can vary according to the individual. This time it is a Man of Letters who speaks; certain parts of his confession will indicate a literary temperament.

"I had," he said to me, "taken a moderate dose of the *extrait gras*, and all went well. The fit of unhealthy good humour did not last long, and I soon found myself in a state of languor and astonishment tantamount to happiness; so I promised myself a quiet evening. Unfortunately, fate would have me join someone at theatre. I courageously resolved to disguise my immense desire for idleness and immobility. All the conveyances in my neighborhood being engaged, I was forced to walk for miles, amid the discordant noises of carriages and the stupid conversations of passers-by—in short, a whole ocean of trivialities. I already felt a sen-



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sation of freshness at my finger-ends, which soon became icy, as if I had plunged both hands into a bucket of frozen water. But it did not make me suffer; it gave me, rather, a keen sensation of pleasure. Nevertheless it seemed to me that this sensation of cold became more and more intense as I continued on this interminable voyage. Two or three times I asked the man who was with me if it were really cold: and he replied that on the contrary the temperature was more than mild. Once in the box, with four hours of relaxation before me, I imagined I had arrived at the Promised Land. The feelings I had controlled on the way, with all the poor energy I had at my disposal, now broke out, and I gave way to my mute frenzy. The cold kept increasing, yet I saw people lightly dressed and even wiping the sweat from their foreheads with an air of weariness. The delightful idea took hold of me that I was a privileged man, to whom alone was granted the power of feeling cold in summer in a theatre. Finally, it came to such a point, it was so complete, so general, that all my ideas congealed, as it were; I became a fragment of thinking ice; I thought I was a statue carved in a block of ice; and this mad hallucination excited my pride, aroused in me a moral satisfaction that I cannot define. What added to my abominable pleasure was the certainty that all who were present ignored my nature and my superiority; and then the joy of thinking that my friend had never for one instant suspected the strange sensations that possessed me! I had the recompense for my dissimulation, and my exceptional enjoyment was an absolute secret.

"Besides, I had hardly entered the box, before my eyes were struck by an impression of darkness, which seemed to me to bear some relation to the idea of cold. It may be that those two ideas had borrowed their strength from each other. You know that Haschisch always conjures up luminous magnificences, glorious splendours, cascades of liquid gold; every form of light is propitious, that which shines on a table-cloth, and that which clings like spangles to points

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and rough edges, the candelabras in a room, the candles of the month of Mary, the avalanche of roses in a sunset. It appears that this miserable chandelier shed a really insufficient light for my insatiable thirst for brilliance; as I told you, I seemed to enter a world of darkness, which gradually deepened, while I dreamed of polar nights and eternal winters. As for the stage (it was a stage dedicated to Comedy), it alone was illuminated, infinitely small and placed so far off that it seemed to be at the end of an immense stereoscope. I cannot say that I heard the actors, you know that's impossible; from time to time my mind seized a fragment of some phrase, and, like a clever dancing-girl, used it for a spring-board from which to plunge into deep dreams. You might suppose that a play, heard in this fashion, would lack sense and coherence; don't mistake me; I discovered a very subtle sense in the drama created by my preoccupation. Nothing in it shocked me, and I somewhat resembled that Poet who, upon seeing *Esther* performed for the first time, found it quite natural that Amam should make love to the queen. As one might guess, it is when he throws himself at Esther's feet to ask forgiveness for his crimes. If all plays were constructed according to this method, they would gain in beauty, even those of Racine.

"The actors seemed extremely small to me, and very carefully outlined, like Meissonnier figures. I saw distinctly, not only the most minute details of their costumes, such as the pattern of the material, the seams, buttons, etc., but also the edge of the wig, the blue, white, red and all the rest of the make-up. And these Lilliputians were bathed in a cold, magic brilliance, like that given by a glass neatly adjusted to an old painting. When I finally escaped from this cavern of cold darkness, when the phantasmagoria within me began to disappear and I returned to my senses, I felt a lassitude greater than anything I had ever experienced, even after laborious and urgent work."

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It is at this period of the intoxication that a new sensitiveness, a superior acuteness, manifests itself in all the senses. Smell, sight, hearing, touch, participate equally in this improvement. The eyes have a vision of Eternity. The ear hears almost inaudible sounds in the midst of a vast tumult. It is then that the hallucinations begin. Exterior objects slowly and successively assume singular appearances; they become deformed and transformed. Then the equivocations commence: the errors and the transposition of ideas. Sounds take on colours and colours contain music. This, one might say, is quite natural, and any poetical mind, in a sane and normal state, easily imagines such analogies. But I have already warned the reader that there is nothing purely supernatural in the intoxication of Haschisch; these analogies merely assume an unusual vivacity; they penetrate, they invade, they overpower the mind because of their despotic nature. Musical notes become numbers, and if you have a gift for mathematics, melody, audible harmony, while it preserves its voluptuous and sensual character, transforms itself into a vast arithmetical operation in which numbers beget numbers and where you may follow the phases and the progression with inexplicable rapidity and an agility equal to that of the performer.

It often happens that personality disappears and that objectivity, which is the property of Pantheistic Poets, develops so abnormally that the contemplation of objects outside yourself makes you forget your own existence, and causes you to lose yourself in them. Suppose you look at a tree, gracefully waving in the wind; in a few seconds, what in the brain of a Poet was no more than a natural comparison becomes a reality in yours. First you attribute to the tree your passion, your desire or your melancholy; its murmurs and its writhing become yours, and before long you are the tree. In the same way, the bird that flies to the uttermost reaches of the skies *represents* first the immortal desire to fly above things human; but already you are

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yourself the bird. I picture you seated and smoking. Your attention becomes fixed on the bluish clouds that rise from your pipe. The idea of evaporation, slow, regular, eternal, enters your mind, and you begin to apply this idea to your own thoughts, to your thinking matter. Through a strange equivocation, by some kind of transposition or intellectual *quid pro quo*, you will feel yourself evaporating, and you will attribute to your pipe (in which you feel yourself crouching and packed together like the tobacco) the strange power of *smoking yourself*.

Luckily, this interminable imagination only lasts a minute, for an interval of lucidity allowed you to make the effort and glance at the clock. But another stream of ideas carries you off; for yet another minute you will be tossed about in a living whirlpool, and this other minute will be another eternity. For the proportions of time and of being are completely upset by the multitude and intensity of the sensations and ideas. It is as if one lived several lives in the space of an hour. Are you not then like some fantastic novel which was being lived instead of written? No longer is there an equation between the organs and the senses; and it is this fact which is at the root of all criticism directed against that dangerous practice which precludes perfect liberty of action.

When I speak of hallucinations you must not take the word in its strictest sense. A very subtle distinction characterizes the pure hallucination, such as doctors have often had occasion to study, from the hallucination or rather from that misapprehension of the senses during the mental state caused by Haschisch. In the first case, the hallucination is sudden, perfect and fatal; besides, it finds no pretext nor excuse in the world of outside things. The intoxicated man sees shapes and hears sounds where there are none. In the second case, the hallucination is progressive, almost voluntary, and it only becomes perfect, it only ripens, through the action of the imagination. Finally, it has a pretext. Sound will speak, will say distinct things, but there was a sound. The

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drunken eyes of the man who has taken Haschisch will see strange shapes; but, before being strange or monstrous, these shapes were simple and natural. Energy, the almost speaking vivacity of the hallucination during intoxication, in no sense vitiates this original difference. The second has its roots in the environment, and the former has no such roots, in the present.

The better to explain this bubbling over of the imagination, this blossoming of dreams and this birth of poetry to which a brain intoxicated by Haschisch is subject, I shall tell one more anecdote. This time it is not an idle young man who speaks, nor is it a man of letters; it is a woman, a rather mature woman, inquisitive, of an excitable nature, who, having yielded to the temptation of using the drug, thus describes her visions to another woman. I transcribe literally.

"Strange and astonishing as were the sensations I experienced during my twelve hours of folly (twelve or twenty? —I don't know which), I shall never try it again. The spiritual excitement is too vivid, too great the weariness that follows; and, to be frank, I find this childishness criminal. I finally yielded to curiosity; besides, it was a discreet folly, committed in the house of two old friends, where I saw no harm in losing some of my dignity. First of all, I should say that this accursed Haschisch is certainly a perfidious substance: one sometimes imagines oneself rid of the intoxication, but this is no more than a deceptive calm. There are respites, then it begins again. Thus, at ten o'clock at night, I found myself in one of these temporary states; I thought I was free of that superabundance of life which had caused me intense pleasure, it is true, but not without fear and anxiety. I began to eat with enjoyment, as though wearied by a long voyage. For up to this moment, out of prudence, I had abstained from eating. But, before I even rose from the table, my delirium had caught up with me,



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as a cat catches a mouse, and the poison began again to play evil tricks with my poor brain. Although my house was only a short distance from our friends' château, and though a carriage was waiting for me, I felt so utterly a slave to the desire to dream and give way to this irresistible folly, that I joyfully accepted their invitation to remain there till the following day. You know the château; you know that they have arranged, furnished and *modernized* the part in which the owners live, but that the part which is generally unoccupied has been left as it was, with its old style and its old decorations. They decided to fix up a bedroom for me in this part of the château, and for that purpose they chose the smallest of these rooms, a kind of boudoir, rather decrepit and faded, but none the less charming. I must describe it to you as well as I can so that you may understand the strange vision that haunted me; a vision which never left me for one entire night and which gave me no chance to watch the flight of time.

"This boudoir was very small, very narrow. Above the cornice the ceiling was rounded like a vault; the walls were covered with long, narrow mirrors, separated by panels on which landscapes were painted in a free, decorative style. Above the cornice, on the four walls, allegorical figures were represented, some in attitudes of repose, others running or flying. Above these were brilliant birds and flowers. Behind the figures rose a painted trellis that followed the curve of the ceiling, which was gilded. All the interstices between the cross-pieces and the figures were gilded, and in the centre the expanse of gilt was broken only by the geometrical network of the painted trellis. You see it looked rather like a very distinguished cage, a lovely cage for a very big bird. I must add that the night was wonderful, transparent, and the moon so bright that even after I extinguished the candle, all the decoration was still visible, not illuminated by my own vision, as you might believe, but

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lighted up by the beautiful night, whose brilliance brought out all this golden embroidery, these mirrors and these variegated colours.

"I was at first astonished to see great spaces stretch out before me, beside me, and on all sides; there were limpid lakes and green landscapes reflected in tranquil waters. You can guess what those panels would look like when reflected by so many mirrors. As I raised my eyes I saw a sunset like molten metal, cooling. This was the gilt of the ceiling; but the trellis made me think I was confined in some kind of cage or house opening out on all sides on to space, and that I was only separated from all these marvels by the bars of my magnificent prison. I began to laugh at my illusion; but the more I looked, the more magical, the more life-like it became, and the more despotic a reality it acquired. From that instant the idea of imprisonment dominated my spirit, without too greatly disturbing, I must admit, the various sensations afforded me by the spectacle spread around and above me. I imagined that I was imprisoned for a great length of time, perhaps for millions of years, in this sumptuous cage, in the midst of these fairy-like landscapes, bounded by these miraculous horizons. I dreamed of *la Belle au bois dormant*, of an act of expiation I had to perform, of a future deliverance. Above my head fluttered brilliant tropical birds, and as I heard the sound of the little bells on the necks of horses wending their way on the high road, my two senses fused their impressions into one single idea, and I attributed to the birds that mysterious song of bronze, and I thought they were singing with metal throats. Evidently they were talking about me as they celebrated my captivity. Mocking monkeys and comic satyrs seemed to be making fun of this reclining prisoner, condemned to complete immobility. But all the mythological deities gazed on me with charming smiles, as if to encourage me patiently to endure the witchcraft, and their eyes looked out from under



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their eyelids as if to hold my glance. I concluded that if old mistakes, if certain sins unknown to me, had called for this temporary punishment, I could still count on some superior goodness which, while it forced me to be prudent, would offer me pleasures more worth while than the dolls that delight our youth. You see, these moral considerations were not absent from my dreams; but I must admit that the pleasure I had in contemplating these brilliant colours and shapes, and believing myself the centre of some fantastic drama, frequently absorbed all my other thoughts. This state persisted for a long, long time. Did it last till dawn? I don't know. I suddenly saw the morning sun enter my room; I was greatly astonished, and despite all my attempts at remembering, it was impossible for me to know if I had slept, or if I had patiently experienced a delicious insomnia. A short time ago, it was night, and now it was day! And yet I had lived, lived a great while—I do not know how many myriads of existences! The notion of time, or rather the measure of time, having been abolished, I could only gauge the length of the night by the multitude of my thoughts. However long it might appear to me from this point of view, still it seemed to me that it had not lasted more than a few seconds, that it had not even taken its place in eternity.

"I will not speak to you of my weariness—it was tremendous. I have heard that the enthusiasm of poets and of creators is not unlike what I experienced, although I have always believed that people entrusted with the task of stirring us up should have, themselves, a very calm temperament; but if poetical frenzy bears any resemblance to what I went through after taking a little teaspoonful of that drug, I think that all poets pay dearly in order to please their public; and it was not without a certain prosaic satisfaction that at last I returned to my home, my intellectual home, I mean back again to real life."

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This is evidently a reasonable woman; I shall use her confessions simply to make certain useful notes which will complete this very brief description of the principal sensations caused by Haschisch.

She spoke of the dinner as of a timely pleasure, coming at a moment when a temporary lull, which seemed to last, permitted her to return to real life. Indeed, there are, as I have said, deceptive calms and intermissions; often Haschisch arouses a voracious hunger, almost always an excessive thirst. Only the dinner or the supper, instead of providing a complete rest, causes this new paroxysm, this vertiginous crisis, of which this woman complained, which was followed by a series of enchanting visions, lightly coloured by fear, to which she gracefully resigned herself. The tyrannical thirst and hunger in question are not gratified without an immense amount of labour. For man believes himself to be so far above material things, or rather he is so overwhelmed by his intoxication, that he has to summon a great deal of courage in order to grasp a bottle or a fork.

The final crisis caused by the digestion of the food is indeed very violent; it is impossible to fight against it; and such a condition would be unbearable if it lasted too long, and if it did not soon give way to another phase of the intoxication, which, in the aforesaid case, was composed of splendid visions, sweetly terrifying and yet full of consolation. This new state is what the Orientals call the *Kief*. It is no longer something whirling and tumultuous; it is a calm and motionless beatitude, a glorious resignation. For quite a while you have not been master of yourself, but you are completely unconcerned. Sorrow and the sense of time have disappeared, and if they should sometimes happen to recur, they would be transfigured by the dominating sensation: and they would then be, as compared to their habitual form, what poetical melancholy is to positive sorrow.

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But, above all, observe that in this woman's story (it is for this reason I have transcribed it) the hallucination is of a bastard nature, and has its reason for being in exterior things; the mind is only a mirror in which the environment is seen changed in an exaggerated manner. Then we see intervene what I must call the moral hallucination: the subject believes he must do an act of expiation, but the feminine temperament, which is little given to analysis, did not permit her to note the singularly optimistic character of this hallucination. The benevolent glance of the Olympian Deities is poetized by a gloss essentially *Haschischin*. I will not say that this woman did not feel a sense of remorse; but her thoughts, momentarily turned towards melancholy and regret, were soon coloured by hope. This is a remark I shall still have occasion to verify.

She spoke of the fatigue felt the next day; indeed, this weariness is always great, but it is not always felt immediately, and it is not without astonishment that you are forced to realize it. For at first, when you are quite certain that a new dawn has arisen on the horizon of your life, you experience a wonderful sense of well-being; you imagine you are in possession of a marvellously nimble mind. But no sooner are you out of bed than a trace of your intoxication follows and hinders you, like the ball and chain of your recent servitude. Your weak limbs timidly support you, and every moment you fear that you will break like some fragile thing. An intense lassitude (there are some who pretend it is not without a certain charm of its own) overpowers your mind and spreads through your faculties, like a mist over a landscape. You find yourself, for some hours, again incapable of work, of action, or of energy. This is the punishment for your impiously prodigal use of the nervous fluid. You have disseminated your personality to the four winds of the sky, and now, what a great effort it is to gather it together again and concentrate it!

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### IV.

#### THE MAN-GOD

THE TIME has come to leave aside all this jugglery and these absurd marionettes, born of the smoke of childish imaginations. Have we not graver matters to consider: modifications of human sentiment and, in one word, the *moral* of Haschisch?

So far, I have only made a short study of the intoxication caused by Haschisch; I limited myself to pointing out the salient features, especially the material facts. But what is infinitely more important, I believe, for the intelligent man, is to know the effect of the poison on what is spiritual in himself, that is to say, the enlargement, the deformation and the exaggeration of his natural sentiments and of his moral perceptions, which then present, in an exceptional atmosphere, a real phenomenon of refraction.

That man who, having long been a slave to Opium and Haschisch, and weakened by the habit, has yet found the necessary energy to free himself, appears to me like a prisoner who has escaped. He inspires in me more admiration than the prudent man who has never sinned, having always taken care to avoid temptation. The English, in regard to Opium-Eaters, often use terms that seem excessive only to those innocent people to whom the horrors of this weakness are unknown: *Enchained, fettered, enslaved!* Chains, in truth, besides which all the others, chains of duty, chains of illegitimate love, are no more than threads of gossamer, than spiders' webs! Fearful marriage of man with himself! "I had become a bounden slave in the trammels of opium, and my labours and my plans had taken a colouring from my dreams," says Ligeia's husband; but in how many marvellous pages has not Edgar Poe, the incomparable Poet, the irrefutable philosopher—who must always be quoted in re-

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gard to the mysterious maladies of the mind—described the sombre and captivating splendours of Opium? The lover of fiery Berenice, Egæus the metaphysician, speaks of a change in his faculties, which forced him to give an abnormal, monstrous value to the most simple phenomena. "To muse for long, unwearied hours, with my attention fixed on some trivial quotation in the margin or in the text of a book; to be absorbed, for the better part of a summer day, in a quaint shadow falling aslant upon the tapestry or on the floor; to forget myself for an entire night, watching the steady flame of a lamp or the embers of a fire; to dream away whole days because of the perfume of a flower; to repeat, monotonously, some common word, until the sound, by dint of frequent repetitions, ceases to convey any idea whatever to the mind: such were a few of the most common and least pernicious aberrations of my mental faculties: not, indeed, altogether unique, but certainly defying analysis or explanation." And nervous Augustus Bedloe, who swallowed his dose of opium every morning before taking his walk, assures us that the chief benefit he derived from this daily poisoning was the exaggerated interest it gave him in all things, even the most trivial. "Nevertheless, the opium produced the usual effect, which was to give an intensity of interest to the exterior world. In the trembling of a leaf, in the colour of a blade of grass, in the shape of a trefoil, in the buzz of a bee, in the lustre of a drop of dew, in the wind's sighing, in the vague odours wafted from the forest, were created a whole world of inspirations, a magnificent and varied procession of disordered and rhapsodical thoughts."

So did the Master of the Horrible, the Prince of Mystery, express himself, through the mouth of his characters. These two characteristics of Opium can readily be applied to Haschisch; in both cases the intelligence, once so free, becomes enslaved; but the word *rhapsodical*, which so well defines a series of thoughts suggested by the exterior world and fortuitous circumstance, is more terribly true in the case of



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Haschisch. Here, reason is no more than a piece of wreckage at the mercy of the currents, and the train of thoughts is infinitely more accelerated and more rhapsodical. I mean to make it quite clear that I believe Haschisch to be, in its immediate effect, far more potent than Opium, far more the enemy of a regular mode of living; in one word, far more disturbing. I don't know if ten years of intoxication by Haschisch would bring about a disaster equal to that caused by ten years of Opium-eating; I only say that for the present, and for the morrow, Haschisch has a more baneful effect on the nerves. The one is a quiet seducer, the other an unruly Demon.

In this last section I intend to define and analyze the moral havoc caused by these dangerous and delicious gymnastics, a havoc so great, a danger so stupendous, that those who return from the battle only slightly wounded, seem to me like heroes escaped from the cavern of some multiform Proteus, each one an Orpheus who has vanquished Hell. This language may be considered unduly metaphorical; yet I believe these exciting poisons to be not only one of the most terrible and the most certain means at the disposal of the Power of Darkness to enlist and enslave deplorable Humanity, but also one of his most perfect embodiments.

This time, to shorten my task and make my analysis clearer, instead of bringing together scattered anecdotes, I shall accumulate a mass of observations and credit them to one fictitious character. I thus must invent a soul to suit my purpose. In his *Confessions*, DeQuincey quite truthfully states that Opium, instead of sending a man to sleep, excites him, but only in a natural manner; and therefore, to estimate the marvels of Opium, it would be absurd to refer the matter to a cattle dealer, for he would dream of nothing but oxen and pasture-lands. No, I have no intention of describing the heavy fantasies of a breeder intoxicated with Haschisch; who would ever be willing to read them? In order to idealize my subject, I must concentrate all the rays into one single circle, I must polarize them; and the

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tragic circle into which I shall gather them will be, as I have said, a soul of my own choice, something analogous to what the eighteenth century called *l'homme sensible*, to what the Romantic school named *l'homme incompris*, and to what the mass of citizens generally stigmatize under the epithet of *original*.

A temperament half nervous and half splenetic seems to me to be the most favourable for the development of this particular intoxication; to this I shall add a cultivated mind, given to the study of form and colour; a tender heart, made weary by unhappiness, but still youthful; if you will allow me, I shall go so far as to endow him with past faults, and, what must be the natural result in a nature easily aroused, if not positive remorse, at least a regret for time ill-spent and profaned. A taste for metaphysics, a knowledge of the different philosophical hypotheses regarding human destiny, are certainly not useless attributes, as are, no less, a love for virtue, for abstract, Stoic or mystical virtue, which is to be found in all books on which the modern child is fed, and which is declared to be the highest summit to which a distinguished spirit might attain. If I add to all this a delicate sensibility, that I omitted as a supererogatory condition, I believe that I shall have gathered together the general elements commonly attributed to the modern man with a sensitive nature—what one might call *the banal form of originality*. Let us now see what will become of this individual driven to distraction by Haschisch. Let us follow the development of his imagination to its ultimate and most splendid resting-place, to the man's belief in his own Divinity.

If you are one of these souls, your innate love for colour and form will find an outlet in the first stages of your intoxication. Colours will suddenly acquire an unusual energy and will possess your imagination. The delicate, mediocre, or even bad paintings on the ceilings will become fearfully lifelike; the dullest pattern in the wall-paper of an inn will impress you as a splendid diorama. Nymphs with



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radiant flesh will fix their eyes on you, eyes deeper and more limpid than the sky or the sea; figures of antiquity, dressed in their sacred or military costumes, simply by a glance exchange solemn confidences with you. Sinuous lines form a definitely clear language by which you can read the agitation and the desire of souls. Nevertheless there develops that mysterious and temporary state of the spirit, when the full depth of life, beset with multiple problems, completely reveals itself in the spectacle before one's eyes, be that spectacle natural or merely trivial—when the first object seen becomes the perfect symbol. Fourier and Swedenborg, the one with his *analogies*, the other with his *correspondence*, become incarnated in the vegetable and the animal matter which lies before you, and instead of teaching with the voice, they instruct you by the form and by the colour. The significance of the allegory assumes unsuspected proportions for you. I shall note in passing that the allegory, that *spiritual genre*, that bad painters are apt to despise, but which is really one of the primitive and natural forms of poetry, is again assuming its legitimate dominion over the intelligence affected by intoxication. Haschisch spreads itself over life like a magic glaze; it colours it with solemnity and illuminates its great depth. Rugged landscapes, flying horizons, a view of the city whitened by the cadaverous lividness of a storm, or illuminated by the concentrated ardours of the setting sun—depths of space, allegory of the depth of time—the dance, the gesture or the diction of actors, if you happen to be in a theatre—the first sentence you see as your eyes fall on an open book—in one word, everything: the universality of Beings rises up before you with a new and unsuspected glory. Grammar, even arid grammar, becomes a sort of magic to conjure with; words are resurrected, made of flesh and bone: the substantive, in its substantial majesty, the adjective, a transparent vestment that colours it like the glazing on a painting, and the Verb, angel of motion, that gives the swing to the phrase. Music, that other language, dear to idlers or to

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deep minds that seek relaxation in various forms of work, speaks to you of yourself and recites your Life's Poem; it becomes part of you, and you melt into it. Music speaks your passions, not in a vague, indefinite manner, as it does in your casual evenings at the opera, but in a detailed, positive way, each cadence of the rhythm marking some well-known cadence of your soul, each note changing into a word, and the entire poem entering your mind like a dictionary instinct with life.

You must not believe that all these phenomena occur haphazardly in the mind, with the shrill accent of reality and the disorder of outside life. The inward vision transforms all things and gives to everything that beauty which it lacked in order to be pleasing. It is to this essentially voluptuous and sensual phase that one must attribute the love of limpid waters, flowing or stagnant, which develops so astonishingly during the cerebral intoxication of certain artists. Mirrors become a pretext for certain reveries that are like a spiritual thirst, joined to a physical thirst that dries the throat, and of which I have already spoken; flowing water, fountains, harmonious cascades, the blue immensity of the sea, roll, sing, sleep with an inexpressible charm. Water spreads itself with bewitching magic, and although I have no great faith in the furious follies caused by Haschisch, I cannot affirm that the contemplation of some limpid gulf might not be without a certain peril for someone fond of space and of crystal, and that the ancient fable of Undine might not become a tragic reality for the enthusiast.

I have said enough about the monstrous development of time and of space—two ideas always connected, but which the spirit confronts without sadness or fear. With a certain melancholy pleasure, the spirit gazes backward across the deep abyss of years, and audaciously plunges into infinite distances. I presume that it is already understood that this abnormal and tyrannical development is also applicable to all sentiments and to all ideas; thus to benevolence

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(I believe I have given an excellent example of this); and to love. The idea of beauty must naturally occupy a large place in a spiritual temperament such as I have supposed. Harmony, the perfect balance of line, eurhythmic movement, these appear as necessities to the dreamer; as duties not only for all created beings, but also for the dreamer, who finds himself, at this period of the crisis, gifted with a marvellous ability to comprehend the immortal and universal rhythm. And if our fanatic lacks personal beauty, you must not suppose that he suffers from that fact, nor that he considers himself a discordant note in the world of harmony and beauty his imagination has improvised. The sophisms of Haschisch are numerous and admirable; they tend towards optimism, and the chief, if not the most efficacious, is the one that transforms desire into reality. No doubt this is also true of many cases in everyday life, but here with how much greater candour and subtlety? Besides, how could a being so capable of understanding harmony, a kind of priest of the Beautiful, permit an exception and a mistake in his own theory? Moral beauty and its power, grace and its seductions, eloquence and its prowesses, all these ideas offer themselves first as correctives of an indiscreet ugliness, then as comforters, and finally as the perfect flatterers of an imaginary sceptre.

As for love, I have heard many people, filled with a school-boy's curiosity, trying to inquire about it from Haschisch addicts. What could be this intoxication of love, already so powerful in its natural state, when it is enclosed in that other intoxication, as a sun within a sun? This is the question that arises in the minds of many people whom I shall call the idlers of the intellectual world. To answer that dishonest half of the question which is understood, and which dares not appear in words, I shall refer the reader to Pliny, who has spoken somewhere of the properties of hemp-seed, in language that will dissipate many illusions on this subject. Besides, it is known that debility is the usual result of any abuse of the

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nerves and of the drugs used to excite them. And as there is no question here of effective strength, but of emotion and susceptibility, I shall simply ask the reader to remember that the imagination of a nervous man, intoxicated by Haschisch, is driven to a prodigious degree of excitability which is as hard to determine as the possible strength of the wind in a hurricane, and that his senses are subtilized to a point almost as difficult to estimate. It is thus easy to believe that the most innocent caress, a simple handshake, might have a value exaggerated many thousand times because of the actual state of the soul and senses, and might even promptly cause them to swoon, which vulgar mortals consider the *summum* of happiness. But it is indubitable that Haschisch awakens, in an imagination too obsessed with love-adventures, certain tender memories to which sorrow and misery add a new lustre. It is no less certain that a strong dose of sensuality enters into this turmoil of the mind; and, besides, it is worth noticing—which might be enough to settle this point regarding the immorality of Haschisch—that a sect of the Ismailites (those who are descended from the Assassins) extended its adorations far beyond the impartial *Lingum*; that is to say, to an absolute and exclusive cult of the feminine half of the symbol. It would be only natural, every man being a representation of history, to see an obscure heresy, a monstrous religion, develop in a mind which, in a cowardly fashion, surrendered to the mercy of an infernal drug and smiled at the squandering of its own faculties.

Since we have seen, during the intoxication by Haschisch, a strange good-will manifested even toward strangers, a kind of philanthropy that owes more to pity than to love (here appears the first germ of that satanic spirit which will develop later in an extraordinary fashion), but which goes so far as to fear hurting anyone, you may imagine what a localized sentiment might become when applied to someone who is dear and who is playing, or has played, an important part in the moral life of a sick person. Cult, Adoration, Prayer, dreams

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of happiness surge and dart forth with the fierce energy and brilliance of fireworks; like powder and the colouring materials of fire they dazzle and melt away into the darkness. There is not a sentimental arrangement of any kind to which the flexible love of a slave to Haschisch can not lend himself. The desire for protection, an ardent and devoted paternal sense, may be found combined with a guilty sensuality that Haschisch will always excuse and absolve. It goes even further. I presuppose certain bitter memories, because of mistakes made in the past, a husband or a lover thinking sadly (in his normal state) of that stormy past: this bitterness can change to sweetness; the desire for forgiveness makes the imagination cleverer and more beseeching, and remorse itself, in that diabolical drama that is only a long monologue, may act as excitant and powerfully warm the enthusiasm of the heart. Yes, remorse! Was I wrong in saying that Haschisch appeared, to a really philosophical spirit, like a perfectly Satanical instrument? Remorse, that strange ingredient of pleasure, is easily drowned in delicious contemplation, in a kind of voluptuous analysis; and this analysis is so rapid that man, this natural Devil, to speak like the Swedenborgians, does not realize how involuntary it is, and how every second he approaches diabolical perfection. He *admires* his remorse, he glorifies himself, and all the while he is losing his freedom.

My imaginary man—the spirit of my own choice—has thus arrived at that peculiar state of joy and serenity in which he is *constrained* to admire himself. All contradiction disappears, all philosophical problems become clear, or at least seem to. All is food for pleasure. The plenitude of his actual existence inspires in him an immeasurable pride. A voice speaks inside him (alas! it is his own voice), and says to him: “You now have the right to consider yourself superior to all men; no one knows or could understand all that you think and all that you feel; they would even be incapable of appreciating the good-will with which they inspired you.



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You are a King, unrecognized by the crowd, and who lives alone in his belief; but why care? Do you not possess a sovereign contempt that strengthens the soul?"

But we can suppose that from time to time a biting memory enters and corrupts that joy. Some outside suggestion can revive a disagreeable past. How many vile and stupid actions does not one's past reveal, actions which are truly unworthy of the King of thought and which can soil his ideal dignity? But that the man who takes Haschisch will courageously face these reproachful ghosts of memory that rise before his vision, and he will find in these hideous reminiscences new reasons for pride and pleasure. This will be his reasoning: the first sensation of sorrow once over, he will analyze curiously the action or the sentiment the memory of which disturbed his present glorification, the motives that made him act at that time, the attendant circumstances, and if he does not find reasons enough in those circumstances, if not for the absolution, at least for the attenuation of his sin, do not imagine that he feels himself beaten! I am present at his reasoning, as though watching a mechanical toy under transparent glass: "This ridiculous, cowardly, or vile action, the memory of which disturbed me for a moment, is a complete contradiction to my true nature, my actual nature, and the very energy with which I condemn it, the inquisitorial care with which I analyze and judge it, proves my high and divine aptitude for virtue. How many men are there in the world clever enough to judge themselves, or strict enough to condemn themselves?" And not only does he condemn but he glorifies himself. The horrible recollection thus absorbed in the contemplation of an ideal virtue, of an ideal charity, of an ideal genius, he goes away triumphantly to a spiritual Debauch. Counterfeiting the sacrament of Penance in a sacrilegious fashion, himself both Penitent and Confessor, we have seen that he gave himself an easy absolution, or, worse still, in his condemnation he found a new source of pride. Now, from the

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contemplation of his dreams and virtuous projects, he infers a practical aptitude for virtue; the loving energy with which he embraces this phantom of virtue seems to him proof positive, peremptory, of the necessary virile energy for the accomplishment of his ideal. He confounds completely dream with action, and his imagination becoming more and more enthusiastic before the enchanting spectacle of his corrected and idealized nature, substituting this fascinating picture of himself for his real individuality, so weak in will, so rich in vanity, he ends by ordering his apotheosis in these simple terms, which contain for him a world of abominable pleasures: *I am the most virtuous of men!*

Does this not remind you of Jean-Jacques Rousseau who, after having shamelessly confessed himself to the Universe, with a certain keen pleasure dared to utter the same cry of triumph (or at least the difference doesn't really count), with the same sincerity and the same conviction? The enthusiasm with which he admired virtue, the nervous tenderness which filled his eyes with tears at the sight of a beautiful deed or at the thought of all the beautiful deeds he wanted to commit, were enough to give him a superlative opinion of his moral value. Jean-Jacques intoxicated himself without Haschisch.

Shall I continue my analysis of this victorious monomania? Shall I explain how, under the influence of the poison, the man I have imagined supposes himself to be the centre of the Universe? Shall I explain how he becomes the living and exaggerated embodiment of the proverb that says that passion creates passion? He believes in his virtue and in his genius: can one not guess the result? All things around him are so many suggestions that stir up a world of thoughts within him, all more coloured, more alive, more subtle than ever, and covered with a magic glaze. "These magnificent cities," says he, "where the superb houses are set at intervals like stage-scenery, those fine ships balanced by the waves of the bay with nostalgic indolence, and which seem to translate



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our thought: when shall we set sail for the Fortunate Isles?—these museums which contain such beautiful forms and such intoxicating colours, these libraries where are gathered the labours of Science and the dreams of the Muse, these instruments which placed together seem to speak with one voice, these enchanting women made more charming still by the science of adornment and the rare magic of their glances; all these things have been created *for me, for me, for me!* For me, has humanity laboured, been martyred, been immolated, to serve as pasture, as *pabulum*, to my implacable thirst for emotion, for knowledge and for Beauty!" I skip over and cut short. No one should be astonished at the final, the supreme thought born in the dreamer's mind: *I have become God!* That ardent, savage cry bursts from his lips with so intense an energy, with so terrific a power of projection, that if an intoxicated man's belief and will had any virtue, this cry would topple the angels scattered over the paths of Heaven: I am a God! But soon this storm of pride changes to a calm, silent, restful beatitude; the universality of man is announced colourfully, and lighted as it were by a sulphurous dawn. If by chance a vague memory filters through to the soul of this poor, happy man: there might be another God? be certain that he will rise up before HIM, that he will question his commands and that he will face him without terror. Who is the French philosopher who said—with the intention of mocking modern German doctrines: "*I am a god who has dined poorly.*" This irony could never touch a man intoxicated by Haschisch; he would quietly reply: "*Perhaps I did dine poorly, yet I am a god.*"

### V

#### MORAL

BUT THE morrow! the terrible day after! Limbs relaxed, tired, nerves exhausted, a desire to weep, the utter im-

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possibility of doing any sustained work, all these symptoms teach you cruelly that you have played a forbidden game. Hideous nature, despoiled of last night's illumination, resembles the melancholy vestiges of a feast. The will of all our faculties the most precious, is particularly affected. It has been said, and it is almost true, that this substance causes no physical ills, no serious ones, at least. But can it be asserted that a man, incapable of action and only fit for dreaming, is really well, even though all his limbs be sound? Besides, we know human nature well enough to be certain that a man who can, with a teaspoonful of drugs, instantly obtain anything he may desire on earth or in the sky, will never get anything through honest work. Can one imagine a state wherein all the citizens became intoxicated with Haschisch? What citizens! What soldiers! What legislators! Even in the East, where the use of it is so widespread, there are governments which have understood the necessity of proscribing it. No, man is forbidden, on the pain of intellectual death and decay, to upset the primordial conditions of his existence and to disturb the equilibrium of his faculties with the environment for which they were intended, in one word, to change his destiny and substitute for it a fatality of a different kind. Think of Melmoth, that wonderful example. His horrible suffering was the result of the disproportion between his marvellous faculties, acquired instantaneously by a Satanical pact, and the world in which, as God's creature, he was condemned to live. And none of those he tried to win over would consent to purchase the terrible privilege from him on the same conditions. Indeed, every man who does not accept the conditions imposed by life, sells his soul. It is easy to see the relationship which exists between the Satanical Creations of Poets and those living creatures who have become slaves to Stimulants. Man wanted to become God, and now, by virtue of an uncontrollable moral law, he has fallen much lower than his real nature. *He sells his soul piecemeal.*

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Balzac certainly thought that there was no greater shame nor deeper suffering for man than the abdication of his will. I saw him once, among friends, when the prodigious effects of Haschisch were being discussed. He listened and questioned with an amusing attention and vivacity. Those who knew him suspected that he was interested. But the idea of thinking in spite of oneself shocked him. They showed him the *dawamesk*; he examined it, smelt it, and returned it without touching it. The struggle between his almost childish curiosity and his repugnance to any abdication of the will was strikingly seen in his expressive face. His dignity prevailed. Indeed, one can hardly imagine the Theorist of the Will, this spiritual brother of Louis Lambert, consenting to lose one particle of this precious substance.

Despite the admirable services rendered by ether and chloroform, it seems to me that from the point of view of spiritualistic philosophy the same moral blemish can be found in all these modern inventions which tend to curtail human liberty and indispensable sorrow. It was not without a certain admiration that I once heard this paradox from an officer: he told me of the cruel operation performed on a French General at El-Aghouat, which killed him in spite of the chloroform. This General was a brave man, and much more than that, one of those souls to which one naturally applies the term: chivalrous. "It was not chloroform," he said to me, "that he wanted, but to have the eyes of the whole army fixed upon him and the regimental music playing. Thus he might have been saved." The Surgeon did not share the officer's opinion; but the chaplain would no doubt have admired his sentiments.

It seems superfluous, after all these considerations, to insist on the immoral character of Haschisch. Were I to compare it with suicide, a slow suicide, with an always blood-stained, ever-sharpened weapon, no reasonable person could find fault. Were I to liken it to sorcery, to magic, which tries, by operating with matter, and by occult mysteries, to

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acquire a power forbidden to man and permitted only to those who are considered worthy, no philosophic soul could take exception to the comparison. If the Church condemns magic and sorcery, it is because these militate against God's intentions, and because they suppress the work of time and seek to make conditions of purity and morality superfluous; and because the Church only considers real and legitimate those treasures won by assiduous good intentions. We call a thief the gambler who has found the means of always winning; how shall we name the man who wants to buy, with very little money, both happiness and genius? In the very infallibility of the means lies the immorality, just as the supposed infallibility of magic is responsible for its infernal stigma. Shall I add that Haschisch, like all solitary pleasures, makes the individual useless to men and makes society superfluous for the individual, driving him to a singular kind of self-admiration and, day by day, pushing him toward the luminous gulf wherein he admires his Narcissus-like appearance?

What if a man could, at the expense of his dignity, of his honesty and of his free-will, still derive certain spiritual benefits from Haschisch, make a sort of thinking machine, a fruitful instrument, out of it? That is a question I have often heard asked, and I now answer it. To begin with, as I have explained at length, Haschisch never reveals to the Individual more than what he is himself. It is true that this individual is, as it were, cubed and raised to the highest power, and as it is equally certain that the impressions outlast the debauches, the hope expressed by these Utilitarians at first sight does not appear unreasonable. But I must ask them to observe that those thoughts from which they expect so much are really not as fine as they appear in their momentary travesties, covered with the magic of their finery. They belong to the earth rather than to the sky, and owe a great part of their beauty to nervous agitation, to the avidity with which the spirit seizes upon them. Besides, this hope is a vicious circle; let us admit, for a moment, that Haschisch

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gives, or at least increases, genius; they forget that it is in the nature of Haschisch to reduce will power, and thus grant on one side what it withdraws from the other, that is to say, imagination without the ability to profit by it. Finally, when speaking of a man who is clever and strong enough to submit to this alternative, one must consider another fatal, terrible danger, which is inherent in all such habits. They soon become necessities. One who has recourse to poison *in order* to think, will soon be unable to think *without* taking poison. Can one conceive the awful fate of a man whose paralyzed imagination can no longer function without the help of Haschisch or Opium?

In Philosophical studies, the human mind, imitating the movement of the stars, must follow a curve which brings it back to its point of departure. To conclude is to complete the circle. In the beginning I spoke of that miraculous state in which the mind of man could sometimes be found as though by some special grace; I have said that, ever aspiring to warm his hopes and to raise himself towards the Infinite, at all times and in all countries he showed a frantic weakness for drugs, even those that were dangerous, and which, as they exalted his personality, could present for an instant to his eyes this second-hand Paradise, the ultimate object of all his desires; and that finally this bold spirit, reaching down into Hell without knowing it, thus proved its original grandeur. But man is not so abandoned, so deprived of honest means to reach Heaven, as to be obliged to invoke pharmacy and Sorcery; he need not sell his soul in order to pay for the intoxicating caresses and the friendship of Houris. What is Paradise if bought at the price of eternal Salvation? I imagine a man (should I say a Brahman, a Poet, or a Philosopher?) seated on the steep Olympus of spirituality; around him, the Muses of Raphael or of Mantegna, to console him for his fasts and assiduous prayers, to tread noble dances, and to gaze at him with tender eyes and brilliant smiles; the divine Apollo, the Master of all knowledge (that



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of Francavilla, of Albert Dürer, of Goltzius, or of others, what matters? Is there not an Apollo for every man who deserves one?), caressing the most vibrant chords with his bow; below him, at the foot of the mountain, in the mud and the briars, the multitude of mortals, the crowd of helots, simulating expressions of enjoyment and uttering cries wrung from them by the sting of the poison; and the saddened Poet says to himself: "These unfortunate beings, who have neither fasted nor prayed, and who have refused redemption through labour, demand from Black Magic the means of attaining a supernatural existence without delay. Magic deceives them and gives them a false happiness, a false light; while we, the Poets and Philosophers, have regenerated our souls by constant work and by contemplation; by an assiduous exercise of the will and by a constant nobility of intention, we have created for our use a garden of true beauty. Believing in the adage which says that faith moves mountains, we have accomplished the only miracle God ever allowed us to achieve!"

THE END







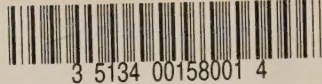


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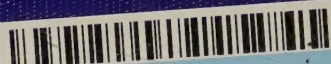
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